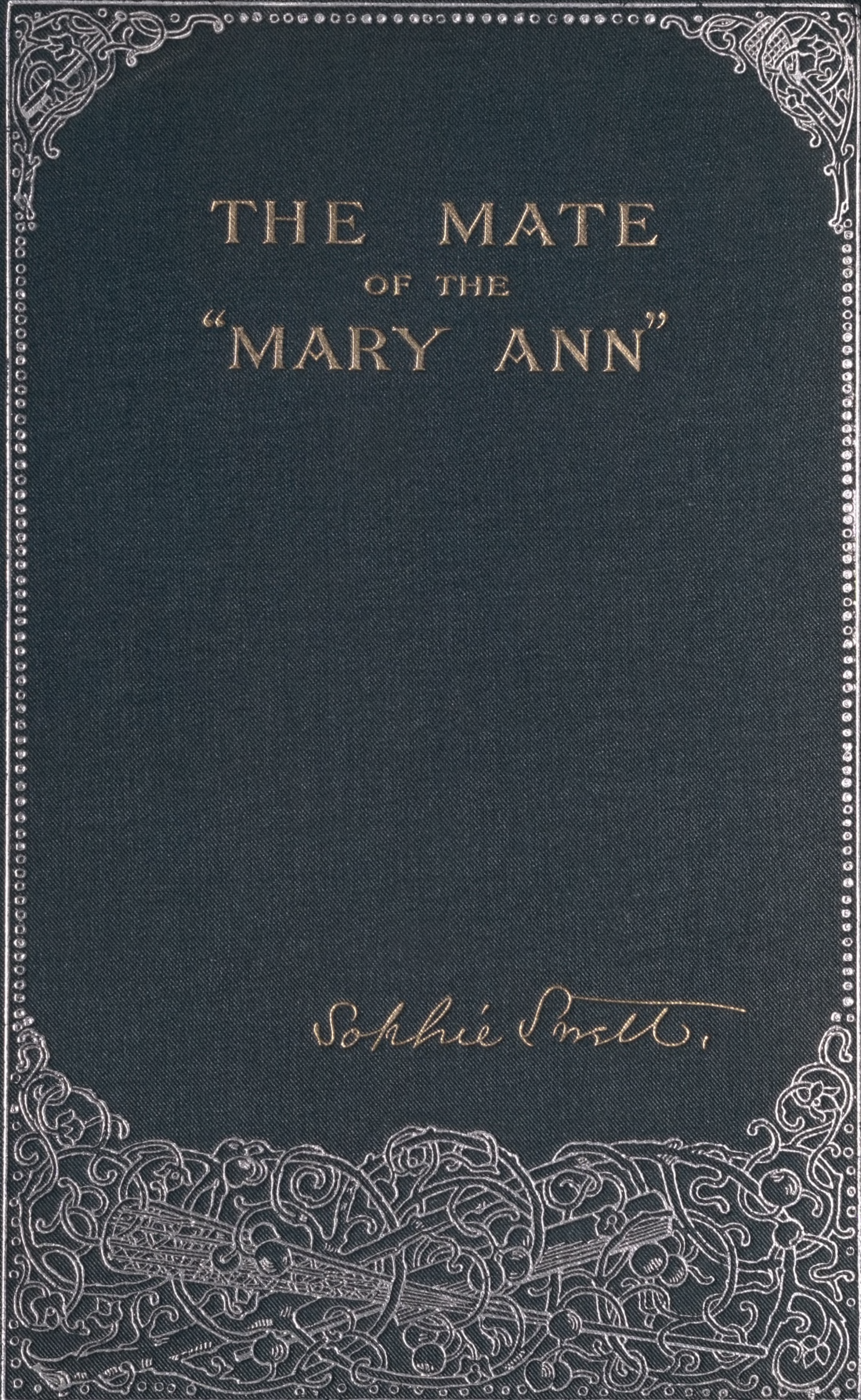


THE MATE  
OF THE  
"MARY ANN"

*Sophie Pratt.*





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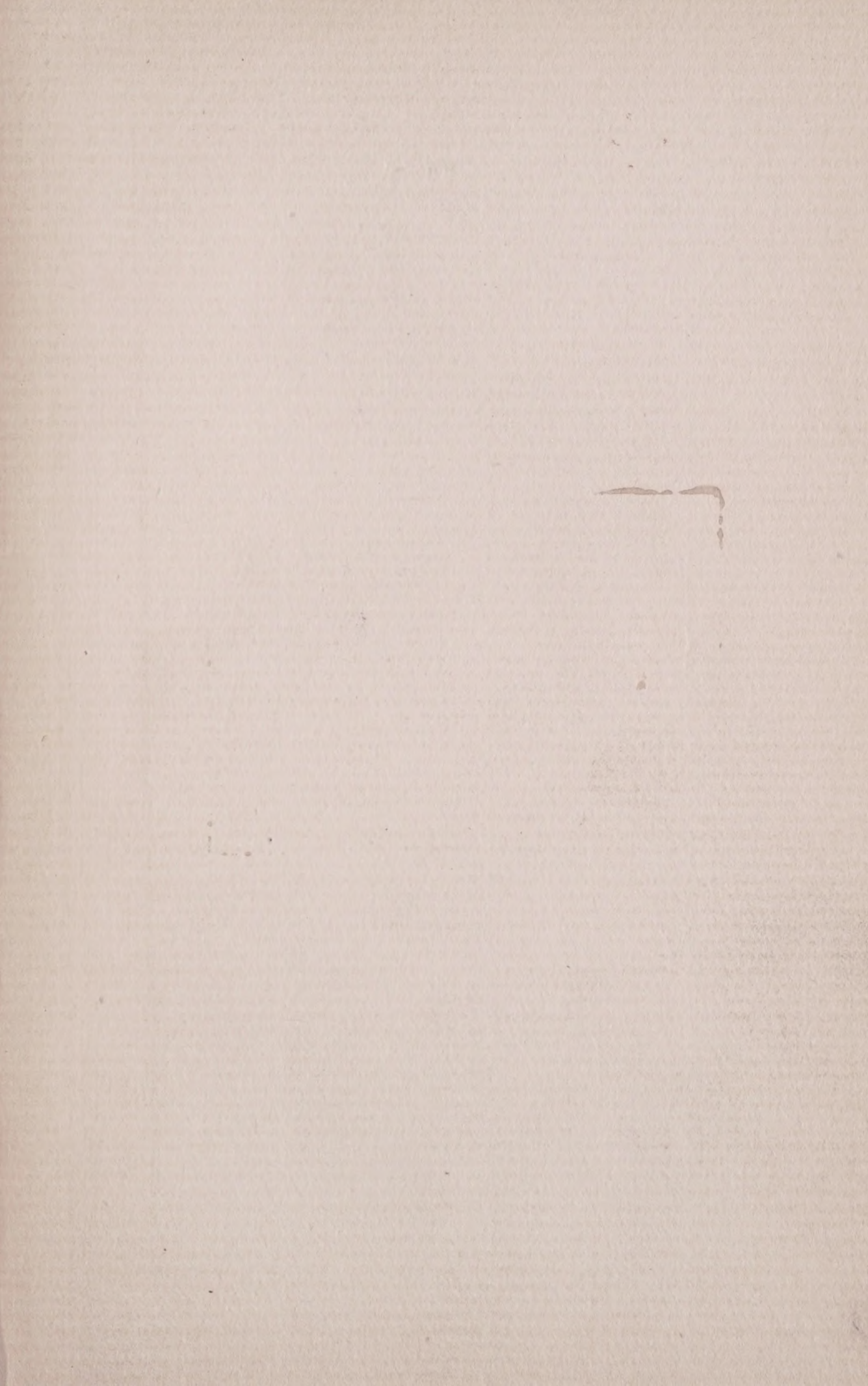
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[Page 201.]

“THE BOY WAS LYING AGAINST A FELLED TREE.”



# THE MATE OF THE "MARY ANN"

A Story

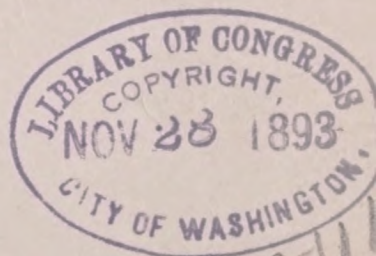
BY

SOPHIE SWETT

AUTHOR OF

"CAPTAIN POLLY" "FLYING HILL FARM" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED



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# THE MATE OF THE "MARY ANN"

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## CHAPTER I

ONLY one boy, and so many girls! Robin whisked the little ones behind the clump of scrub-oaks whenever any one came along the road. Jean would not be thrust out of sight, but sat dangling her long legs from the fence and staring at every one, never in the least ashamed of being a girl.

But then Jean had not overheard their father say to their mother, on that dreadful night when they thought he was dying, that if there were only one more boy among them he should not be so afraid to leave them. He had partially recovered; he had even crept up to the hill to the church and preached one Sunday; but still the trouble was heavy at Robin's heart—so many helpless girls on his feeble hands. And it made matters worse that Papa Dinsmore had old-fashioned ideas about girls, and did not realize that they could ever be otherwise than helpless.

He worried more about them now than about the congregation under his care, which had dwindled away until now the picturesque church of rough



stone and shingle which the Land Company had helped to build when Penauhant promised to become a fashionable summer resort, was abandoned to the ravages of wind and weather. The tide of fashion had turned now, in its fickle way, and was flowing towards Menawket, farther up the cape, and the rich people who had beautiful and quaint cottages at Penauhant all deserted them.

The Dinsmores had come with the rich people, but they had not gone with them. Mr. Dinsmore had believed in the future of Penauhant, and had "sunk" all the money he had there, and the failing health, which had been one cause of his coming, had failed more and more, and now the wolf's howl at the door was louder than the roar of the wind about the bluffs on winter nights. And sometimes it seemed as if Ken had no idea that his was a responsible position, but thought that one could be a boy just for the fun of it.

Ken came breathlessly scrambling up the steepest side of the bluffs one morning, and called to Robin, who was in the porch:

"I promised to take a party from Quansett out in the *Mary Ann* this morning, and now I—I can't go," he said. "You see, I promised a boy that I would go down to Kingstown with him the very first chance we got. It's—it's on business. And Cap'n Saul is going down in the *Scud*, and will take us."

The color had rushed into Ken's girlishly fair face, and his eyes searched the sand which he was restlessly kicking.

"You're going with Dave Freneau," said Robin, severely.



"What if I am?" demanded Ken, sharply. "There wasn't a fellow at St. Luke's who began to have such a lot of brains as Dave Freneau. He knows things, too, that he doesn't tell! Hallett & Close would give something to know the things that he knows."

"Ken, I wish you would be more practical and study, as papa wants you to. It is better to do simply what one ought than to have great ideas that never come to anything. They say that boy has been uneasy since his father died, and he is making you so."

"Wouldn't a fellow who had anything in him be uneasy buried in this hole?" demanded Ken, forcibly. "But Dave isn't uneasy now, because he has got me to help him, and this place will do to make a start in. Won't Hallett & Close open their eyes! And people who have been hinting that I wasn't of any account will have to sing small!"

"I haven't meant to hint, Ken—that is horrid," said Robin, contritely. "But, oh, I wish I were a boy!"

"I'm not sure that you'd be very much of a fellow," said Ken, with cruel candor. "A boy has to stand a lot of rough things. And he can't holler when he's hurt, as a girl can. And he doesn't keep talking. I say, Robin, you will go?"

"I'm afraid they won't like to go out with a girl," said Robin, doubtfully.

"They'll have heard all about you," said Ken. "They'll know that you can manage a boat as well as I can. There's a stiffish breeze, but it's steady. You'd better take Thanny Baker with you; he'll be of some use."



Without another word Robin went into the house to get her rough jacket and her fore-and-aft cap and other sailor gear.

"I wish I could go," said Jean, meeting her at the door as she came out. "I'm tired of jingling that old piano that never was tuned. And I sha'n't hear the twins' spelling, nor try to keep Posy from toeing in. If either of us is going to have a chance to be a tomboy, I think it ought to be me."

"Do say it ought to be *I*, Jean," said Robin, puckering her brows, as she crept along under the study windows with a pair of oars over her shoulder.

"What does it matter when no one who hears us knows the difference?" said Jean, philosophically. "Anyway, I'm tired of such a lot of grammar and so few good times."

Jean walked over to the edge of the bluff to watch Robin on her way down the straggling sandy path to the little pier at which the *Mary Ann* lay, cleaned of all fishiness, and shining with a coat of new paint applied by the captain and mate's own hands in preparation for summer visitors.

Robin flung out a flag from her bow—it was a Union Jack, which Cap'n Saul had produced from some ancient stores—and blew a shrill whistle, and soon a row-boat put out from Lobster Point. Thanny Baker's tow head was visible in it, and Thanny's small arms were pulling with a will. Thanny was but twelve; but he was a "cute" little Yankee, to whom sailor lore had come much easier than his A B C's. He and his half-brother Saul lived together in a little house on Lobster Point, and were their own cooks and house-keepers.



"Saul's goin' mackerelin'. There's an orfle big school in," said Thanny. "I thought you'd be wantin' me. Them city folks don't think nothin' about the mackerel. Better reef her a little, hadn't I? There's consid'able of a breeze outside."

The *Mary Ann* cut the blue water sharply, and dipped to one side as the strong breeze filled her sail, and Robin kept the sheet in her hand, and had the little pucker between her brows that seldom went away while she was in command of the *Mary Ann*.

Thanny felt a great admiration for Robin; he had gone so far as to determine that the ship of which he meant to be captain before he was twenty-five should be named the *Robena Dinsmore*.

"Mackerel are orfle high. You can sell 'em for five dollars a barrel right down on the wharf at Kingstown; but I'd ruther go 'long of you in the *Mary Ann* than to go mackerelin'," he said, loyally.

"Is Saul going after mackerel?" asked Robin. "I thought he was going to Kingstown."

"He said he had a couple of passengers to take down there, and the mackerel are down that way, too. He generally manages to kill two birds with one stone; that's the way with Saul," said Thanny, proudly.

A party of five was waiting for the *Mary Ann* on the wharf at Quansett—a middle-aged man and lady, and a boy and two girls of about Robin's own age.

"Them's the folks that's been visiting to Close's, over to Sandford," said Thanny, as the boat came in sight of the wharf. "They're New York folks. They're glass folks, too, only they don't make com-



mon kinds, like Sandforders: they make it colored and pictered out for churches. There's some in a meetin'-house over to Deepmouth. Saul and me went once, and I never heard a word the minister said, a-watchin' the folks's noses get red and blue and yaller."

They had reached the wharf by this time, and Thanny stepped out first, while Robin busied herself about the sail. She felt an unusual reluctance to meeting these people in her professional capacity of mate of the *Mary Ann*. They were of a different type from Quansett's ordinary summer guests, and, moreover, it was especially unpleasant to feel like a boy among girls of her own age. The other people whom she had taken out were artists, who had been wholly absorbed in the "tone" and "sympathy" of the views, and had evidently regarded her only as a picturesque value.

"Where's the captain?" demanded the gentleman, adjusting his eye-glass.

"It—it's *her*," replied Thanny, indicating Robin by a backward jerk of his thumb. "Me and her is cap'n and crew and all hands to-day. The cap'n he's gone away. She's mate, any how, all the time, and consid'able of the time I'm all hands."

"A girl! What an extraordinary thing!" Robin heard the lady say.

"Is there no experienced skipper about here who will take a party out?" said the gentleman, with a touch of impatience, to old Solomon Gross, who was mending a net on the wharf.

"You needn't be a mite afraid to resk yourself 'long of the parson's gal," he said. "I ain't sayin'











that it's accordin' to nater for a gal to sail a boat; but she can do it, and that 'pears to be the main p'int. I can't say how she or the *Mary Ann* would behave in a harrycane, but take 'em 'long shore there this afternoon, and there ain't no danger."

The gentleman looked first at Robin and then at the *Mary Ann*, and his forehead wore an anxious frown.

"You couldn't take us out yourself, I suppose?" he said to old Solomon.

"Me? Lor' bless you, where you from that you hain't heerd about the mackerel? I expect the Lord sends 'em all ketched and fried up your way; but here we have to step 'round lively to get 'em."

Robin was turning away with a sense of relief that they would not go with her. But, after all, business was business; the money meant so much, and she must not be "like a girl"—Ken's oft-repeated accusation. "I don't think you need to be afraid," she said, turning again to the party, with an air of grave dignity. "I really understand managing a boat."

"Oh, papa, we must see the gulls on that queer place that they call the Chunks!" cried the younger of the two girls, who, Robin had observed, was more stylish but not nearly so "grown-up" in her manner as the other.

"I shouldn't think that you were strong enough to manage a boat," said the man, doubtfully.

"It isn't strength, you see; it's 'know how,'" interposed Thanny; "and I'm goin' along myself." Thanny pulled up his suspenders and set his dilapi-



dated hat squarely upon his head with a business-like air.

"Well, perhaps we may venture a little way with you," said the gentleman, after a low-toned consultation with his family, and Robin proceeded to make ready.

"You don't like them folks, do you?" said Thanny, sympathetically, as he took another reef in the sail to soothe their passengers' anxiety. "Your cheeks are as red as beets. It was all-fired mean of Ken to go off. Saul says that he and that French boy ain't up to any good."

"What French boy?" Their passenger had stepped to the side of the boat, and, hidden by the sail, had heard Thanny's remarks.

"It's Dave Freneau, sir—only just a boy that works in the glass factory over to Sandford," replied Thanny, politely, but with an aside to Robin to the effect that some people had a large bump of curiosity.

"He must be John Freneau's son—the boy I want to see," Robin heard the gentleman say to his wife.

"You don't think that his father's pretended discovery amounted to anything?" the latter remarked.

"It may have amounted to nothing, and it may have been valuable. The man guarded it with almost insane jealousy. The question is whether the boy knows anything about it."

Robin listened wonderingly. "Dave knows;" that was what Ken was always saying triumphantly; and this man—a man, not a boy like Ken—had spoken as if what Dave knew might be of real importance.

"What was he saying about Dave Freneau?" whispered Thanny, eagerly, as he helped Robin to bring



the boat alongside the slip for the greater convenience of their passengers. "I'll tell you who he is—the man that Freneau used to work for, the man that he used to rave about down in Steve Prettygo's shop. He said his foreman tried to cheat him out of something he'd invented, or found out, or something. I guess he was mad with everybody that had any money; that was the way with old Freneau, though some think he was wronged. He'd better have set Annette after the folks that wronged him! Oh, but ain't Annette Freneau the girl? That boy Dave is quieter, but I guess he's deep. Saul thinks so. I'll tell you what it is"—Thanny spoke lower still, and with an air of great importance—"some folks think that Dave knows what his father discovered, though he was too careful to put it into writin' where anybody could come acrost it. Steve Prettygo thinks Dave's got it tattooed into his skin, but Saul says he got that out of a book. He's always reading books, Steve Prettygo is. Some thinks your Ken knows all about it, him and Dave's so thick. It's something about glass, because Freneau used to boast that it would be worth a million dollars to Hallet & Close. He said this Mr. Rawlins tried to get it for nothing, but I shouldn't wonder if he was kind o' crazy. Saul thinks—"

' The party was coming into the boat by this time, the boy leaning on his father's arm, and contracting his brows as if every motion caused him pain. He insisted upon establishing himself in the stern, and taking charge of the helm, while the girls perched themselves up in the bow.

The boy, whom his relatives called Duke, talked



continually in a thin, high-keyed voice, which sounded oddly like a very old man's. He asked innumerable questions, and as Thanny was an animated bureau of information, they proved very genial companions. Thanny knew the exact number of barrels of mackerel in the greatest catch on record, the amount of Quansett's annual shipment of cranberries, and the number of boys and girls hired to pick them; the length of the sea-serpent which Steve Prettygo had seen off Pebbly Reach, and the amount of game to be found in Deepmouth woods. When statistics grew stale he told thrilling stories of the winter storms, and of the "Portergee" bark wrecked on the Chunks. Once when Robin differed from him a little on a point of fact he referred to Ken as his authority.

"Ken? Ken who?" demanded the lame boy, at once. "I went to school with a boy of that name once. It was at St. Luke's, up in New Hampshire. Wasn't he a fine fellow, though! The best one I ever knew. I'd give something to see him again. You see, I—I'm lame, and I was a little fellow then, too, and he looked out for me, and punched a fellow's head for me."

The best fellow he ever knew! Of course it was Ken; it would be like him to befriend a lame boy. Robin's heart warmed; she would believe in Ken, in spite of his apparent selfishness and Saul Baker's suspicions that "he and the French boy were up to no good."

"What was the fellow's name that you were talking about? Ken—Kenelm isn't common, you know," continued the boy. "It must be Ken



Dinsmore. Are you really Ken Dinsmore's sister?"

"Isn't it just too lovely for anything that we're coming here to live?" cried the younger girl, whom they called Kitty, a blond girl of fourteen, given to superlatives and little hops and screams. "Duke will like it now that he has found a friend here. And I'm perfectly crazy to get here."

Robin thought she should not be more surprised if the King of the Peacocks in Jean's fairy-book had proposed to set up his court on the Chunks. They were so dainty and elegant, and their clothes were of a fashion quite unknown even to the Sandford dress-makers.

"Is this Ken's boat?" asked Duke. "I'm going to have a boat; the doctor said I must live out-of-doors. Ken doesn't have a tutor, does he?"

"He goes to the Sandford High-school," replied Robin. "He didn't want to go after vacation, but now he wants to study chemistry, so I think he will go."

"Chemistry — that's what smells so orfle, ain't it?" asked Thanny. "That's what Dave Freneau was up to, down in Sears's old shop. Some said he was trying to make stuff that would blow folks up. Annette would, anyhow. She chased Tommy Sears half a mile with the poker for saying her father was an old blowhard. And he was, too."

"Annette has had a hard time," said Robin, apologetically. "She's only fifteen, and she and Dave are all alone in the world, and I don't know whether any one is very good to them."

"You'd better not try to be good to Annette if



you don't want your head broke!" said Thanny, concisely.

"Do you go to school?" asked Kitty, feeling herself and her thirst for information to have been in the background all too long.

"No, I can't be spared. I have lessons with papa when he is strong enough, and I teach the others, and I have to help Moira. She's an old Irishwoman, our only servant," explained Robin.

"Then you're of use in the world; that's the great thing," said the older girl, whom her sister called Peggy; she was sixteen, Robin thought, and her gloves were entrancingly long, and a hat just like hers could have come from nowhere but Paris. Robin found it vaguely surprising that such a sentiment should proceed from beneath that hat.

She found herself drawn on to further confidences concerning the twins' quaint speeches and Moira's queerness, and her new friends were full of interest and sympathy.

Robin's spirits were high when the *Mary Ann's* prow was turned homeward after leaving the party at the Quansett pier.

"They seemed like girls I used to know," she said to herself, "and they didn't seem to think me very queer." The same fair wind which was speeding the *Mary Ann* would bring the *Flying Scud* home from Kingstown, she thought.

But the *Flying Scud* was very late. Robin went down to the slip half a dozen times during the evening. The wind went down with the sun, and probably the mackerel catch had been too great for thrifty Saul to leave early. There was no cause for anxiety,



but there was always a half-acknowledged fear in Robin's heart that Ken would run away.

There at last were the white sails in the moonlight. The *Scud* anchored at her moorings instead of coming up to the slip, and when all was made right her tender set out for the Point instead of the bluffs. That was strange, but Robin waited; Ken might have some reason for going over there before coming home. The row-boat started out for the Point in a few minutes, and Robin drew a long breath of relief. But it was only Thanny who came scrambling up the bluffs.

"Saul sent me," he stammered, breathlessly, "and he said not to scare you or anything. Ken ain't killed nor nothin'; he is all right; but something has happened, and—and them two boys they hain't come back!"



## CHAPTER II

"THEY haven't come back? Ken hasn't come back?" repeated Robin, in a bewildered way, although it really seemed to her like something that she had known for a long time.

"You don't feel anyways queer, do you? Saul told me not to tell you right off sudden, because girls faint away, and it's a lot of trouble to bring 'em to," said practical Thanny.

"Tell me all about it, quick, Thanny!" said Robin, imperatively.

"Well, you see, 'twas jest when they was startin' back from Kingstown. 'Twas 'most dark, and there wa'n't a capful of wind; but Saul he calc'lated there'd be more outside, and they could manage to get home. Them fellers stayed too long up-town; they was up to something; Saul says so. They had a lot of stuff in bottles and boxes that they got at the 'pothecary's. They went up to the lib'ry, and looked at books and things. Cap'n 'Lias Sylvester see 'em there, and he told Saul; they never told where they went. That don't look as if it was for no good, lookin' at books and things, does it? There's a lot of books about whalin' and piruts in that lib'ry, but Saul says it's a waste of time. He says they didn't care nothin' about the mackerel, more'n as if they was minners in the brook."



"Thanny, will you tell me where Ken is?" cried Robin, impatiently.

"Well, I'm a-comin' to it. Saul said not to make you faint away, because it's an orfle job—"

"Has Ken run away to sea?" Robin's voice shook, in spite of all her efforts to control it.

"I don't see as I am a-goin' to tell you if you keep breakin' in," said Thanny, in an aggrieved tone. "Nobody knows what they was a-goin' to do with all them boxes and bottles, but they hain't run away to sea."

Robin drew a long breath of relief.

"It's worse 'n that—at least, for Dave Freneau," continued Thanny. "You see, it was 'most dark, and jest outside of the harbor they come near goin' ker-smash into something. Saul says it might have been only a log, but he thinks 'twas the wand'rin' buoy. You've heard about her—how she got afloat three or four years ago, and jest goes a-sailin' round? Joe Peters saw her off the Banks, and some says she's been clearin' off to Chiny, but she comes home to the Cape every summer, and don't go off till about the time of the line gale."

"Yes, yes, I've heard of it. Thanny, what happened to the boys?"

"Ain't I tellin' you? The *Scud* come nigh runnin' into the buoy; and fetchin' her round sudden, Dave Freneau got hit by the boom, and knocked off into the water. They think his head hit against the anchor that was layin' up in the bow. Anyhow, when they got him out—Saul and Ken and Hank Freeman, they all jumped after him, and got him into the tender in no time—they couldn't fetch him



to. He was livin' and breathin', but he didn't know anything. They put right back to the wharf and got a doctor, and the doctor had him took up to his house. He said it might be a pretty bad case, and it might not; but Ken he wouldn't leave him. He's a-stayin' to take care of him, and he said you needn't be scared nor worried. And—and somebody's got to tell Annette, and I ain't a-goin' to."

"I'll go and tell her. Poor Annette!" said Robin; "I suppose she will want to go down to Kingstown."

"It—it's kind of dark," said Thanny, digging in the sand with his heels in an embarrassed way, "and if you was goin' anywheres else I wouldn't let you go alone, but me 'n' Annette Freneau don't get along."

"Never mind, Thanny, Moira will go with me if I want any one," said Robin, carelessly, as she turned away.

She went around to the back porch and called to Moira. Jean came running out at the sound of her voice.

"Who is hurt? Dave Freneau? Oh, what if it had been Ken? If you're going to tell Annette, I'm going, too."

Moira grumbled about her old bones and the dangers of Honeypot Marsh. Dave and Annette lived in a little house which had once been a shooting-box on the edge of the marsh. Will-o'-the-wisp went flitting about the marsh, and Moira was in deadly terror of him.

The little house had been abandoned by its owners, and the French family had occupied it rent free for nearly a year, their rights undisputed except by an



army of mice and spiders, which Annette's energy had at length put to rout. It was a rough place, but invitingly neat and bright inside.

They knocked loudly in vain, until at length the door was suddenly thrown open, and Annette appeared, holding a lamp over her head, its light showing a very cross face, with heavy brows contracted and thick lips pouting.

Annette was tall for fifteen, and her face would have been attractive if it had not been so cross. Her cheeks had a pretty color, her large mouth showed the whitest of teeth, and the jet-black hair that was combed straight back from her white forehead hung in a heavy braid almost to the bottom of her dress.

"Why you not stop knocking when I say I come?" she demanded, angrily. "I hollair that I come, but I have my hands in the bread. What is the matter? Why you look so at me?"

"Dave!" said Robin; and the color went out of Annette's face as a lamp is blown out by the wind. "We hope it isn't very bad, but there has been an accident," continued Robin. "Dave was knocked off the *Flying Scud*, Cap'n Saul Baker's boat. His head was hurt, and the doctor thought he would better stay at Kingstown. My brother stayed with him."

"I wish he keep away from your brother! I wish he keep with himself! Why has not your brother got hurt instead of Dave?" cried Annette, shrilly. And then her voice broke suddenly. "Oh, my Dave! my Dave!" she sobbed.

"I thought perhaps you would like to go down to Kingstown if the boys didn't come home to-morrow," Robin said. She had taken Annette's hand, and



pressed it sympathetically, but Annette snatched it away roughly.

"How can I go? If I never see my Dave again I cannot go. I have not the money. I have not the cent!" She opened her hand, and shook her pocket expressively.

"I haven't the money, either," said Robin. "Not enough to go in the cars, but I thought we might go in our boat, if you were not afraid. I wouldn't dare to go so far outside alone, but perhaps Cap'n Saul Baker or Steve Prettygo would go with us."

"Go with those men that have laugh and call me names? I will not!" cried Annette. "*How could I go?* They would turn me off from work, and Dave would starve. Now that wicked Mr. Rawlins have come here — he that have let his man rob and ruin my father — it will be worse!"

"I don't believe he is bad; you said the girls were so nice, Robin," said Jean, who never lost an opportunity of expressing her opinion.

"You say he is not bad?" cried Annette. "That is because he is like you—all you rich people that rob the poor."

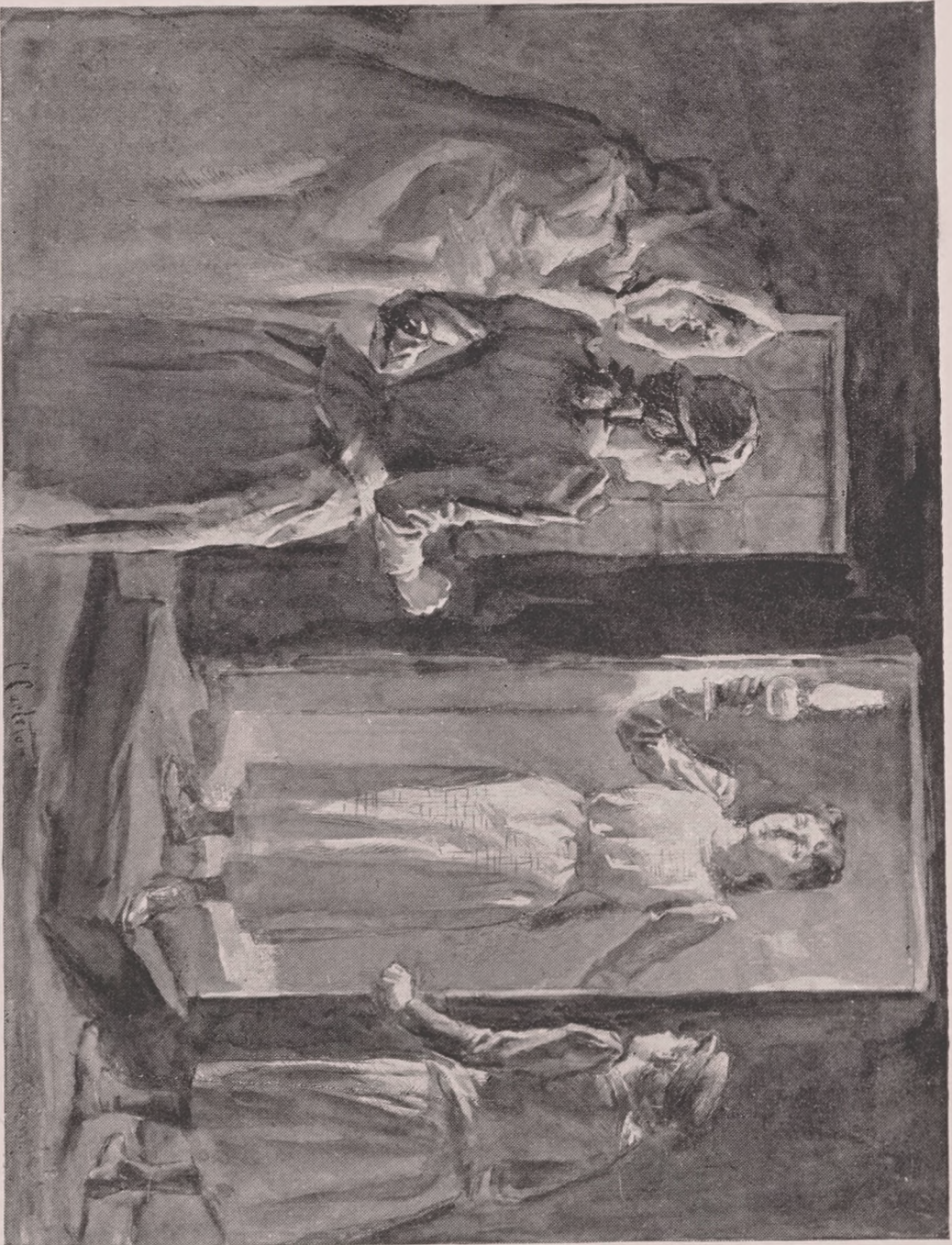
"Oh, Annette, we're not rich!" said Robin. "We're as poor as—as—"

"*Va-t' en!* Clear out!" cried Annette, shutting the door with a bang.

"The saints presarve us! If iver I seen the loikes iv thim Frinch!" cried Moira. "The haythen spache iv her do be enough to drive a Christian wild!"

"You might have known she would be rude to you, Robin," said Jean. "She is rude to every one; she is perfectly horrid."





“ANNETTE APPEARED HOLDING A LAMP OVER HER HEAD.”







Both Jean and Moira had expressed these unqualified opinions in a loud tone, and Annette's window was open. Annette's head was suddenly thrust out of it, the long braid waving wildly.

"*Va-t' en!* Clear-r-r out!" she repeated, shrilly. "Paddy of the petticoats, and you, Jean of the clove lozenges! Shame on you for a cheat, Jean of the clove lozenges!"

Jean's face was scarlet in the moonlight. "You ought to know better than to—than to—have anything to do with such dreadful people," she stammered. "See what you get by it. And mamma doesn't like it at all."

"What does she mean by clove lozenges, Jean?" asked Robin, wonderingly.

"I—I— What is that?"

Robin thought that Jean was only trying to evade an explanation in this mysterious matter of the clove lozenges; but Moira cried out in terror, and, turning, Robin saw close behind them an advancing light.

"Jack-o'-the-lantern! Niver let on that ye sees the rashkill!" cried Moira, running as fast as her old legs would carry her. Jean ran also, and Robin was tempted to follow—it *was* a lonesome road, and the fears of the others were contagious—when suddenly the sound of a horse's hoofs reached her ears.

"I beg your pardon. Why, it's Miss Robin!" The lantern which the rider held up showed her Duke Rawlins's face. "I'm trying to find the house where that Freneau boy lives," he said.

"You have just passed it; the trees hide it," said Robin. "But Dave isn't there." And then she told the story of the accident.



A wrinkle of anxious sympathy grew between Duke's brows as he listened. "They'll need help more than ever," he said. "Father didn't like old Freneau. I suppose he *was* insolent. I'm afraid he won't want his children in the factory. I want to give them a little money."

"They wouldn't take it," said Robin. "At least, I don't think Dave would, and I'm sure Annette wouldn't."

Jean had come up, reassured and full of curiosity. "Indeed she wouldn't take it! She'd tell you to 'va-tong, clear out!' as she told us," she said, with a better imitation of Jean's manner than of her French.

Duke looked disheartened. "I don't know how to get along with girls so very well, anyway," he said. "But a fellow like me, who knows what it is to suffer, thinks about the hard times that such people have."

"If they should be really in want of anything, I will let you know," said Robin. "I think you are very good," she added, heartily.

"Boys don't usually care, you know," explained Jean. "If they have a bicycle and a gun, they don't think of anything else."

Duke suggested that he should ride along with them to save them from another possible fright, but Robin positively declined the escort, knowing that Moira would only draw a peaceful breath when he and his lantern were out of sight. In fact, they found Moira at a safe distance, fairly quaking with terror, and she insisted upon feeling of Robin's and Jean's bones, to be sure that they were sound. And she beguiled the homeward way with thrilling tales



of people who had been "led asthray by that ould rashkill Jack-o'-lantern."

In the middle of the night Jean awakened Robin, standing beside her bed, like a ghost, in her white night-gown.

"I can't sleep till I tell you about the clove lozenges, Robin," she said, with a dry sob.

Robin had been dreaming that Annette had turned into a Will-o'-the-wisp, and was beguiling her into the Honeypot, and then, suddenly, she was the wandering buoy, with a face as long as the reflection of a face in a spoon, and was pelting her with clove lozenges.

"I don't believe it is anything so very bad, Jean," she said, for Jean's repentance was apt to be out of proportion to the offence. "Won't it keep until morning? I'm so sleepy!"

"I can't sleep at all, Robin," answered Jean, dolefully. "I don't know how the twins will grow up. And to think of that girl knowing it and all! And old Mr. Sears looked very queer."

"What did you do, Jean?" Robin was wide awake by this time, and had drawn Jean down beside her on the bed.

"You see, they had a great many clove lozenges down at Bethune's store, and they were not so very fresh. I supposed people would buy the other kinds out of the box, and the clove ones would be left—they are not so nice as peppermint and checkerberry, you know—until there was a great lot of them, and they sold them for a cent a paper. Little Hannah Blodgett told the twins, and Posy wanted to go down and buy some. She said she didn't like



clove lozenges very well, but they were so much for a cent. They had three cents apiece and I had four, and just as we got there an idea popped into my head. We bought ten papers of the clove lozenges, and then we went into old Mr. Sears's store and asked him to change them. I didn't say we had bought them there, but of course he thought so. I said we didn't like clove very well, and I thought we would take the money's worth of mixed candy and dates. Robin, he gave us thirty cents' worth! Of course he thought we gave three cents a paper for the lozenges. Oh, Robin, what shall I do? And little Joey Fickett, whose sister works in the glass factory with Annette Freneau, saw us. He was in both stores; I remember it, now. That's how Annette knew. Joey ran back to Bethune's. I think he was going to do it himself. Isn't it dreadful, Robin? And I have thought a great deal about the twins' morals; I really have."

"It is pretty bad, Jean, certainly," said Robin, gravely concealing her opinion that this sharp practice on guileless Jean's part was a little funny also. "I think you will have to go down and tell Mr. Sears about it, and pay him the difference, for of course he wouldn't have changed them if he hadn't supposed you bought them of him."

Jean shrank visibly. "Oh, Robin, I believe you are worse than papa would have been, only I didn't want to worry him. Do you think I *must* go and tell him?"

"I would go for you," said Robin, "but that wouldn't be the same thing. It isn't such a dreadful thing, Jean. He will know that you didn't stop to think."



"I suppose it must have been the devil," said Jean, plaintively.

"I'll lend you the money if you are short," said Robin, after a little pause, during which she had carefully computed that she had twenty cents which could be spared.

"Short!" echoed Jean, expressively. "Perhaps you think I have four cents every day in the week—like a Vanderbilt or somebody. It's too bad to take your money, but I'll pay you, Robin. I'll go to see Mr. Sears the first thing in the morning. I shall almost hope that the earth will open and swallow me, but I'll go."

The stores at Quansett were three-quarters of a mile away, but Jean returned from her trying errand before breakfast-time.

"It wasn't *quite* so bad as I expected," she confided to Robin, who was helping Moira to make breakfast-cakes. "Not quite so bad, although Mr. Sears laughed, and looked as if he didn't like it very well either, and Granny Nickerson kept chuckling and chuckling to herself. The store wasn't open, so I went around through the garden into the house. Mr. Sears was writing at that queer old secretary in the room with the wainscoting and the polished floor. Joey Fickett did try to change his lozenges, but Mr. Sears wouldn't do it; he said he began to think something was wrong. And before night half the children in Quansett had come to change clove lozenges. Bethune sold out. Oh, Robin, I was so ashamed! Granny Nickerson looked through and through me with her little sharp eyes. You would have thought she hadn't seen anybody so dread-



ful in all the hundred years that they say she has lived. When I said, 'Robin said I must pay the difference,' she said: 'Who is Robin? Oh, you're the minister's daughter. Then it must have been your sister Robin who shook Winky Smith for tormenting a cat. She took the cat home—a little starved yellow thing.' 'Oh, that was our Phœbe Cowslip. She's fat enough now,' I said. 'That was the way Robin got her, I remember now. She's always getting some starved creature and feeding it.' She kept asking me questions about you, and I said that you took care of us all, because papa was ill, and poor mamma was so sensitive that she couldn't help crying at everything, and Ken was only a boy. I said, 'If you're a hundred, as people say, you must know what boys are.'"

"Oh, Jean, I'm afraid that wasn't very polite!" said Robin.

"'I know more'n that; I know what girls are, too,' she said, and she kept giving those dreadful little chuckles, and of course, considering what I had come for, I felt—well, awfully cheap, and wished I hadn't said anything about boys. She wanted to talk about you, and I praised you up, but I said, too, that you made us walk Spanish, and then she chuckled more than ever, and said it was well that we had you. When I came away she called after me that we should remember the clove lozenges, you and I both, as long as we lived. I think I shall, but she needn't have said it! And she told me to tell you to go on taking care of suffering animals, for there were too many who didn't think anything about them. But you mustn't think too much of cats,





JEAN'S CONFESSION TO MR. SEARS.

1871







or you would be an old maid, and live to be a hundred! Isn't she the very funniest old woman you ever saw? I looked back through the window as I went away, and she was hitching across the floor—she went just as if she had been wound up, like a walking doll, and she pushed Mr. Sears away from the secretary, so that she could sit down and write. What do you suppose she wanted to write, Robin? They say that she hasn't any relations in the wide world."

The day passed without any news from Ken. Dave was probably seriously injured, Robin thought, and Ken would not leave him; that was like Ken. But if Dave could be moved, the question of expense might be a serious one to the boys. It was probable that their joint finances had been absorbed by those mysterious purchases at the druggist's which had so disturbed the inquiring mind of Thanny Baker.

She went to bed that night firmly resolved to get to Kingstown in some way—the next day, if no news came from Ken. Her father was full of anxiety, which was very bad for him in his weak condition, and her mother had said that "it really seemed as if Robin might have influence enough over Ken to keep him away from that boy."

Robin slept lightly, and was wide awake in an instant when a little shower of gravel tinkled on her window in the gray of the morning. She sprang up with a joyful expectation of seeing Ken. But it was Annette Freneau who stood down in the driveway with a sullen, tear-stained face upturned to the window. She held something in her hand, carefully folded in a napkin, which she opened as soon as she saw Robin.



"Behold! it is a tartine! It is made of the little marsh strawberries, and they are sweet. It is for peace. It is because I was angry and said bad things. You have meant to be kind—as well as you knew how. I do not think you are like the meddlers; they enrage me. So it is for peace, and to say that I am ashamed, that I have made the *tartine*. Will you have it?" Annette's expression was serious and anxious.

"Why—why, you needn't have, you know; but I'm sure it is very nice, and I shall like it very much," stammered Robin, somewhat at a loss for words, since her previous experience had never included a "tartine of peace." She ran hastily down-stairs. "We will row over to the Point and see if we can get Cap'n Saul to take us down to Kingstown in his boat. See! it is too rough outside for the *Mary Ann* to-day." They were standing on the piazza, and Robin pointed to the white caps.

"I care not for roughness if I come to my Dave," said Annette, with tears in her great black eyes.

The three girls went over to the Point together, Robin and Jean rowing, and Annette hindering more than she helped by energetic but unskilful steering.

Saul Baker was already at his boat-landing with nets and lines. "I don't see exactly how I'm goin' to make it pay," he said, when the girls had made their errand known. "But I agreed to fetch up some groceries for Mr. Sears some day this week, and there is a fair wind, and I can't help thinkin' consid'able about them boys myself. I guess I'll go. I'll be over to your slip in half an hour."



The three girls were waiting on the slip when Thanny set out in the *Flying Scud's* tender to take them on board.

Thanny stared at Annette in undisguised dismay. "*She ain't goin'?*" he whispered to Robin. "She'll be unlucky to go to sea with, just like a cat or a minister; now you'll see!"

"Thanny, how can you talk such nonsense!" returned Robin, severely.

"We've got a potato-patch that needs hoein', anyhow," said Thanny; "and I don't expect she'll want me to go. She fired stones at me once. And she chased Tommy Sears with the pok—"

"I have heard that before," said Robin, with great dignity. "She is in trouble, and we must be kind to her."

"I hain't no objection to bein' kind to her," said Thanny, sulkily; "but she'll fire something at me before the day's over—you'll see!"

This conversation was carried on in a low tone, while Robin sat in the stern of the row-boat, facing Thanny, who was rowing, and who, with Annette in the bow, evidently felt like a soldier whose back is exposed to the enemy's fire.

But Thanny boarded the *Flying Scud* like a man, and said no more about the potato-patch.

The *Flying Scud* was a somewhat clumsy fishing-boat, scarcely worthy of her name. But "give her a fair wind and somebody that knew how to handle her, and she was pretty sure to get there," as Cap'n Saul said. The wind was variable to-day after they got outside, and the sea choppy, and Annette grew white about the lips—a circumstance which had the



effect of raising Thanny's spirits. Sea-sick people would not be apt to "fire things," he reflected.

All the choppy waves were passed at length, and the *Flying Scud* thrust her blunt nose up through the numerous vessels that lay at the long, long Kingstown pier. The girls made their way quickly up to the main street of the town, with its rows of little shops, which on one side had the sea at their back doors, and on the other were overshadowed by great sand-dunes, which threatened to slide down and swallow them up—a queer, foreign-looking little street, with dark Portuguese faces here and there, and picturesque, ear-ringed sailors. A fat and shuffling old man, the town-crier, was going along the sidewalk, ringing a bell, and announcing in a monotonous chant, like a priest's, that the bark *Peveril*, of so many tons burden, had arrived from a foreign port, and those who followed him far enough could learn of just what the *Peveril's* cargo consisted.

"I knew it never grew like any other town!" cried Jean. "It blew here, sand and all, right out of a story-book." Every one lived on this same street, beyond the stores, the doctor among the rest, and the girls hurried along towards his house. Cap'n Saul had warned them to be in haste, lest the wind should go down. He had gone in search of Mr. Sears's groceries, thereby insuring his own honest penny.

A group standing in front of a little fruit and confectionery shop brought Robin to a sudden halt. "Wait just a minute, girls! There are Julia and Martha Hallett, and Miss Ferris, their governess."

The Hallett girls were dressed in the daintiest of summer finery — far too much finery for the occa-



sion it was—and Robin was aware of it; but she became at once painfully conscious of the salt-water stains and the conspicuous darn of her old boating-dress, and of the general disreputableness of Jean's outgrown brown flannel.

"What do you care for those girls?" cried Jean; and Robin flushed, half with shame and half with anger, at Jean's quick discovery of her weakness. An older sister and mentor should not have weaknesses. "Come along! You'll never have any fun if you're clothesy," continued the sharp little sister.

"Is it of me that you are ashamed?" cried Annette, who, in her way, was quick also. "Ah, those girls! It is I who know them!" Her face flushed and darkened into a fierce scowl. "I will not walk on the same ground with them! I will not—"

She broke away from her companions to run across the street, when suddenly she caught sight of another person in the group, who had been hidden by the Hallett girls' draperies and feathers. It was Ken. Robin and Jean saw him at the same moment. Annette rushed into the group, pushing the girls roughly aside, and seizing Ken by the arm.

"Where is my Dave? Is he alive? What have you done with my Dave?" she cried, fiercely.



### CHAPTER III

THE Hallett girls shrank away from Annette, as was quite natural, since the elbows which she had used so freely were very sharp, and Ken shook off her grasp from his arm somewhat impatiently. But he answered her gently enough.

"Dave got a bad hurt, poor old chap. I've just been to the station to see about getting him home. Why, Robin—Jean!"

The Hallett girls saw them at the same time, and there was a chorus of effusive greetings.

"It's such an age since we've seen you, and we're so lonesome since the Rawlins girls went home! You didn't come to our barn dance. *Such* a time as we had! And, just think! Margaret Rawlins wants to be a hospital nurse—and we didn't know what to make of the boy—and do you think—"

"We must hurry," interposed Robin. "We are going to take Dave Freneau home in Cap'n Saul Baker's boat."

"Oh, the French boy who was hurt? I am so sorry for him!" said Julia, with a kindly glance at Annette.

"I'm so sorry, too," chimed Martha; "but oh, we can't let you go! We want to have some fun. And we're trying to get rid of Miss Ferris"—this in a thrilling whisper, while the governess was absorbed in surveying the sand-dunes through her glasses.



"There's no need of your going to the doctor's, Robin," suggested Ken. "He will send Dave down to the wharf in his carriage. Annette can come if she likes." Annette clasped her hands with an eager gesture.

"Tell Annette how Dave is; she is so anxious," said Robin.

"He seems *well* enough; he is almost strong enough to walk," answered Ken.

"If he is getting strong so fast, that is everything," said Robin, joyfully.

"No, it isn't everything," answered Ken, gloomily, as he walked off with Annette towards the doctor's.

What was the mystery about Dave? Did Ken mean that he was maimed or disfigured for life? This thought haunted Robin in the midst of the Hallett girls' chatter.

"We've got to get rid of her," Julia Hallett was whispering in her ear, with a side glance at the governess, "because I am determined to eat quahaug chowder in that restaurant"—pointing to a somewhat dingy door—"and Julia wants to go to the apothecary's without her. Poor Ju! She has heard of something that will take off freckles, but Miss Ferris says it's dangerous; that's nonsense, of course, because Julia couldn't look any worse. I'm going to try a way that Kitty Rawlins told me of to get rid of Miss Ferris. Kitty keeps a list of awfully hard words. Miss Ferris, will you please tell me what a *kerdooshus* is?" Martha had approached the governess, and spoke in a most soft and docile tone.

"A *what*, my dear? I'm sure I never heard the word," said Miss Ferris, in perplexity.



"Would you mind going over to the library and looking it up? I can't get it out of my mind," said Martha, plaintively.

"We can look it up when we get home," said Miss Ferris, surprised by this thirst for knowledge.

"I think if I could know to-day I should never forget it."

Miss Ferris hesitated; she was aware that there were many not uncommon words which she did not know. She had a vague recollection of having heard such a word as this. It might save humiliating disclosures of ignorance for her to discover its meaning. It was so hot that the shade and seclusion of the library would be grateful, and she could think of no great mischief which her pupils could get into; so she went, obligingly, bidding them rejoin her at the station.

There was a heated discussion concerning the rival claims of the quahaug chowder and confectionery and cosmetics. Robin settled it by saying that she was afraid they couldn't stay for the chowder anyway, but she must go to the apothecary's to get some New England rum for Moira to bathe her feet, which were often very painful. They made their way, accordingly, to a trim little shop which boasted as much peacock-blue and yellow glass as any city apothecary shop of them all.

Julia and Martha Hallett both invested in candy to a great extent, and then Julia spent so much time in inquiring about the rival merits of a variety of freckle lotions that Robin despaired of ever finding an opportunity to make her modest purchase. She had a vision of Cap'n Saul wrathfully setting sail



and leaving them to their fate; of the *Flying Scud* becalmed in the dead of the night, miles from home, and of Dave Freneau made desperately ill again by the discomfort and delay.

The purchases were completed at last, and Robin hurried off with her little bottle, positively declining the urgent invitation of the Hallett girls to have some soda-water.

"Here! did you take that piece of paper off the desk?" she heard some one call out to the clerk from an inner room.

"I don't know but that I wrapped something up in it," the clerk replied. "The paper ran short, and one of them was in such a hurry. There was some writing on it, but I didn't think it amounted to anything."

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said the proprietor, appearing in the doorway of the inner room. And they heard him add to the clerk: "I made a note on that paper of the queer mixture that that boy wanted the other day. We didn't have half the stuff, you know. He seemed so excited about it that I had some curiosity. But I dare say it doesn't amount to much."

Robin was scarcely conscious of hearing what he said, in her anxiety to be off; but afterwards she remembered. It was very difficult to get away from the Hallett girls. There was still a full half-hour before it was necessary for them to go to the station. They were sure that Miss Ferris would not be there until the very last minute; they even cherished hopes of getting left and staying all night at the Puritan House.



"It will take her a good while to find out that word," said Martha, complacently. "It's something about Mercury. She doesn't know much. You couldn't have caught Miss Pritchard, our old one, in that way. Oh, I wish we could go up with you in the boat. But I suppose it really wouldn't do to give Miss Ferris the slip in that way."

"We really must go," interrupted Robin, drawing Jean away, and leaving unanswered half the urgent invitations to visit them which Julia and Martha called after them.

They found the rest of the party already on board the *Flying Scud*, and Cap'n Saul very impatient. Robin caught sight of Dave sitting up in the bow; he looked a little pale, but quite like himself, and sat up as if the cushions and shawls which they had provided were quite superfluous. But Annette, sitting beside him, had a distressed and tear-stained face. "What did she mean by behaving like that, when Dave was so much better than they had dared to hope?" thought Robin, indignantly.

"Come down here a minute, Robin," called Ken, as she was going to speak, first of all, to Dave. Ken was in the stern, taking charge of the helm. "I wouldn't go up there yet, you or Jean, either; I want to tell you something first," he added, mysteriously.

Cap'n Saul's voice broke in, shouting to Thanny to "shove her off," and the next instant a wild chorus of cries came from the wharf.

"Oh, wait a minute, do, please—wait a minute and take us, too! We coaxed Miss Ferris—the train is so hot and cindery. And we don't mind in the least if the boat is fishy!"



Julia and Martha Hallett were both shouting together, while Miss Ferris, their governess, was uttering feeble expostulations and prophecies of sea-sickness.

"Miss Ferris can go up in front, can't she?—because she is inclined to be sea-sick," cried Martha, whose energies seemed to be mainly devoted to getting rid of Miss Ferris.

Thanny stayed his hand at once, and Cap'n Saul helped them on board with alacrity.

There was more sense in having rich Hallett's daughters for passengers than them Frenchies, Thanny whispered; and Cap'n Saul, in his heart, was of much the same opinion. He had heard the old people tell that Grandfather Hallett had kept the light-house on the Nubble, and his son Reuben, the present wealthy manufacturer, had gone fishing and worked in the canning factory.

Annette's tear-stained face was one angry scowl as the party came on board.

Miss Ferris folded her shawl and sat down upon it, so close to Dave that her voluminous draperies swept over him.

Robin was deeply perplexed by Annette's tears and Ken's mysterious behavior. The girls had broken in upon his explanation, and there was no opportunity for it now.

Dave had to move, now and then, as the sail shifted, and when he came in sight of the group below he looked at them with a wondering, unrecognizing gaze. He smiled slightly in response to Jean's smile and nod, but Jean said, aside:

"Dave Freneau seems so queer! He looks just



like himself, but he acts as if he were somebody else."

"He says he does not want to go home!" cried Annette. "He does not know where it is. He does not know that I am his sister! He has forgotten everything! It is as if he were not my Dave at all!" Annette's voice broke in sobs. "Oh, make him remember, make him remember!"

Dave surveyed her with an air of abstraction, as if this were a scene in which he had no part. He had a long, grave, intellectual face, with no resemblance to Annette's, except in the black eyes and heavy brows; his strong, square chin showed determination. He had been a boy who was "up and coming," according to Saul Baker's description, although Saul had never been sure that it was to any good purpose. But now when the occasional perplexity passed away, Dave's face wore a vacant, spiritless expression that was pitiful to see.

"Oh, Ken, will Dave ever be himself again?" asked Robin, seizing an opportunity to perch herself beside Ken, who was still at the helm.

"The doctor doesn't know. Some part of his brain was hurt, which affects his memory. People who were hurt so *have* recovered."

"What will they do, Ken? We can do so little to help them," said Robin, anxiously.

"You don't know the worst! You *would* think that what we were doing was boys' play!" said Ken, his thin boy voice hoarse with feeling. "His father had told him his great invention; he never dared to write anything down, because he had been cheated. It was a new way to color glass; cheaper—ever so



much cheaper—and the colors wonderful! He wasn't crazy or dreaming. I've seen specimens that he has done. He was years and years in bringing his idea to perfection. Dave said the first thing he could remember was his father working at it. Mr. Rawlins's manager tried to get it for nothing, but it wasn't a success then. When he found out the one thing that had been lacking, and success was certain, the excitement brought on the fever of which he died. But he wasn't delirious when he told Dave! And, Robin, there was a fortune in it—a fortune for him—and he was going to share with me! What if we are only boys? Don't you see it was *sure*! And now the secret isn't written on a scrap of paper anywhere, and Dave has forgotten!"

"Do have some candy, Miss Ferris!" It was Julia's voice which broke in as the group drew nearer. "You needn't be a bit afraid of sea-sickness, for the water has grown quite calm"—as indeed it had, to Cap'n Saul's dismay. "Well, if she won't have any, Jean, you must carry all the rest home to the twins and Traddles. Now, don't look at Robin! She can't have her way about everything in this world. Here's a nice, fresh piece of paper to wrap it in—no, it isn't either, it's all written over. The idea of that apothecary clerk doing candy up in paper all written over with a lead-pencil!"

"Never mind! it's only on one side," said Jean, who, in truth, was ignobly eager for the candy.

"Catch it," said Julia, doing the piece of paper up into a ball and tossing it to Jean. "Oh, there it goes overboard! I didn't mean to throw it so far. How



stupid! You can't get it, Thanny Baker—there it goes bobbing off."

Like a flash of light the recollection came to Robin of what the apothecary had said about the writing on that paper! The boy who had wanted the queer stuff might have been—probably was Dave. Old Freneau's secret might be written somewhere, after all. "Oh, get it, get it, *get it*, Thanny!" she cried.

"Take care, Thanny! You'll go overboard!" cried a chorus of voices.

"Try, try, Thanny—I'll hold you!" said Robin, with an eagerness which seemed to the rest of the party quite out of proportion to the occasion.

"Never mind, Robin," said Jean; "I can put the candy into my pocket without any paper. The twins and Traddles won't mind."

"The candy! You're always thinking about candy!" said Robin, with an impatience at which Jean was surprised and justly offended. "Just one more try, Thanny!"

And Thanny, with Robin clinging desperately to his legs, thrust out once more the long oar with which the *Flying Scud* was propelled when the wind failed her utterly, and triumphantly drew in the little ball of crumpled paper which Julia Hallett, with what Ken called "a girl's shot," had thrown into the water.

"I should like to know of what use it is, all soaked with salt-water," said Jean.

"Let me have it, Jean. I want to see what is written on it," said Robin.

"I didn't know you had such a bump of curiosity," said Martha Hallett. "Open it carefully or it will



tear. You can scarcely read a word. It's only a prescription, anyway—'oxide' of something, and 'silicate;' what does that mean?"

Robin slipped the wet and crumpled paper into her pocket. The queer words might mean something to Ken, or even join some broken links of poor Dave's memory.

The wind arose suddenly—in obedience to their persistent whistling, the Hallett girls declared—and the *Flying Scud*, in spite of her clumsiness, made such good speed that they reached Quansett as the first of the village lights began to gleam through the dusk. Miss Ferris had telegraphed from Kingstown for the carriage to meet them, and they found it waiting; and Julia insisted, in spite of Annette's scowls, in stowing Dave and her into it, saying they could set them down at home without going out of their way. By the light of the carriage-lamp Robin saw the unrelenting Annette making faces at her benefactors behind their backs as the carriage rolled away.

"Old Granny Nickerson died last night," said Cap'n Saul, as he came on board again from the wharf. "She had another stroke, and just flickered out like a candle, so Jim Gross said."

"And I saw her only yesterday morning, and she was so lively!" said Jean. "But she looked as if a breath would blow her away."

"A fellow wouldn't want to live as long as Granny Nickerson did, unless he had better luck than I have," said Ken, dejectedly.

"There ain't no such thing as luck, commonly speakin'. Stiddy days' works, and there you be," said Cap'n Saul.



"If Cap'n Saul could only convince Ken of the truth of his thrifty maxims he might give up foolish schemes that hindered him from his duty and were sure to end in disappointment," thought Robin. She almost wished that she had let the paper be lost, and yet she told him, as they climbed the bluffs, what it might mean to her.

Ken listened, breathing heavily with excitement. "Why didn't you tell me? I would have stayed and carried it back to the apothecary if it wasn't all plain!" he cried. "It isn't likely that any other boy would have bought stuff so queer that the apothecary would write it down. Give me the paper—quick, Robin!"

"Wait until we get into the house, Ken. I'm afraid of tearing it more. It's carefully folded at the very bottom of my pocket," said Robin. "Don't think too much about it, Ken; there are so few words."

"Well, our ship has come in!" cried Robin, cheerfully, as they entered the house. There was one thing always to be done—to make things cheerful at home. "We thought we should be becalmed, but—"

"Robin, dear, you have heard?" exclaimed her mother, coming to meet them at the door, and clasping Robin in her arms. "Dear old Granny Nickerson—"

"But she was so old, mamma, and it was peaceful," stammered Robin, who, not having been acquainted with Granny Nickerson, could not feel any of the grief which she thought was making her mother hysterical.

"Oh, my dear, it isn't that. One cannot mourn—"



your father says one need not mourn," said her mother. "But she has remembered you—"

"Remembered me? Why, I hardly ever saw her!" cried Robin.

"Remembered you handsomely, darling, though—though not, perhaps, altogether as we could wish, since she has bequeathed to you Adam, her long-tailed monkey, and Banquo, her white cat, as well as her cranberry meadow."

"Her cranberry meadow to Robin! Why, it's worth two thousand dollars!" cried Ken. "And there's going to be a tremendous crop this year! Why to Robin?"

"She seems to have discovered in some way that Robin was fond of animals, and she wished her pets to be well taken care of. She had bequeathed them and the cranberry meadow to several other people and then destroyed the wills, she was so anxious. The last will was drawn up and signed only yesterday forenoon. Lawyer Chase said he was afraid that the excitement caused the stroke; but since she had had two, it was likely to come at any time."

"The clove lozenges! How queerly things happen!" cried Jean. "It was all the clove lozenges! That's what she meant to do when she said we should remember them as long as we lived."

"Clove lozenges?" repeated her mother, pressing her hand to her head. "My dears, what with long-tailed monkeys and white cats and cranberry meadows, and—and now clove lozenges, I am quite bewildered. And the dear children are so wild over the monkey that it's a little trying."



A shout from the direction of the study confirmed this statement, and Mrs. Dinsmore retreated.

"Oh, Wobin, papa turned us out, he's so tired. And he cwacks nuts wiv his teef—see him! see him!" cried Traddles, who was small for four, and not much larger than the queer, wizened old monkey, who perched himself upon the newel-post, and cracked nuts in his sharp little teeth with the air of being perfectly at home.

"Mr. Sears brought him and the nuts," explained Prim, the serious-minded twin; "and he isn't dangerous—you needn't be afraid; but I don't think Traddles ought to take him to bed, as she wants to."

"Oh, Robin, put some nuts in your pocket, and see him grab them out! Papa did, but we don't dare to," said Posy.

Robin obligingly put a handful of the nuts into her pocket, and instantly the monkey's long, lean arm was thrust down into the pocket, while he scolded in so funny and fascinating a way that the children were almost in convulsions. He made so energetic a grab that the nuts flew in every direction, and Prim picked up Robin's handkerchief in a far corner. It was great fun to see him gather up the scattered nuts, not missing one, and screaming out angrily if the children attempted to touch one.

"He tried to get the handkerchief. I think he would have torn it to pieces. He wants everything," said Prim, returning, quite pale, from the corner to which the monkey had followed her. He had retired behind a hall settle to crack his nuts in peace.

"I must go and see papa," said Robin, breaking away from the numerous demands that she should



“THE MONKEY’S LONG LEAN ARM WAS THRUST DOWN INTO THE POCKET.”









beguile the monkey from his retreat, and should go to see the white cat, and should tell of everything she had seen.

"Wait a minute, Robin. Give me that paper," said Ken. "I don't know how I could have forgotten that for a moment."

Robin thrust her hand into her pocket, into the very bottom where the folded paper had been, but there was nothing there except the handkerchief which Prim had restored to her.

Robin grew red and pale by turns. "The monkey! he must have taken everything out!" she exclaimed. "Oh, why didn't I think! But it must be right here. Perhaps Prim picked it up with the handkerchief."

But Prim was sure that she had picked up nothing with the handkerchief.

Ken moved the settle, and routed the monkey from his retirement. There was no scrap of paper anywhere.

"Perhaps he chewed it up and swallowed it," suggested Prim. "I think that was what he wanted to do with the handkerchief. I don't like to say anything against any one, especially before Traddles, but I am *afraid* he's not a very good monkey."

"He couldn't have done anything with it so soon. You lost it before you got home. You never took any care of it!" cried Ken, angrily. "Wasn't it enough for you to let it be thrown overboard, and never tell me anything about it? anything so precious as that. You *ought* to have understood, the very first thing. You would have if you would only have believed what a great thing it was that Dave and I were doing!



"Oh, Ken, it *was* in my pocket! I felt it when we were coming up the bluffs! Oh, I wish I had given it to you then!"

"It's such a lot of good to wish now," sneered Ken. "To think of letting a monkey put his hand into your pocket when you had a fortune in it on a scrap of paper!"

"I was so surprised about Granny Nickerson's legacy it drove everything out of my mind," said Robin.

Ken was preternaturally calm as he turned away. If he should slam the door when he reached his own room it would be almost a relief, thought Robin. Of course it was weak and unmanly to give way to temper like that; she had often on such occasions administered a sisterly reproof; but now there would be a crumb of comfort in seeing Ken so like himself as that. He did not do it, however; he walked deliberately up-stairs, and shut his door in a most dignified manner.

"Now he will surely run away to sea," thought Robin, despairingly. "And it will be all my fault!" She had no heart for the fascinations of the white cat, which was established upon Moira's knee, responding to the ancient Irish which she talked to it in a way which convinced her that "the crathur knew enough to tell forchins." She got the children off to bed at what they felt to be a cruelly early hour, in view of the great excitements of the evening, and she broke away as soon as possible from her father's light-hearted mirth (so unusual with him now) about the charges which Granny Nickerson had bequeathed to her. In truth, her new possessions, as well as Ken's



troubles, were weighing somewhat heavily upon her mind. Banquo, the white cat, by himself would have been a not unacceptable legacy, but if one could only have had the cranberry meadow without Adam! To be fond of him seemed a duty that one owed Granny Nickerson, but Robin was afraid it was going to be difficult; especially since his first prank had been so disastrous.

Her mind constantly returned to speculations upon what he could have done with the paper, and at last she arose, lighted her lamp, and prepared to go downstairs.

"It may be in some nook or cranny that we overlooked," she said to herself. "I am not sure that we looked under the little rug by the study door." She started back from the stairs in sudden alarm, as she discovered that there was a faint light in the hall below. She mustered courage to look over the baluster, and saw Ken, with a bit of paper in his hand; there was writing upon it, which he was trying, with frowning brows, to decipher. "Oh, Ken, you have found it!" she cried, joyfully.

"It's a piece of it! I found it right here by the outer door. I don't see how we could have overlooked it."

"Perhaps he stuck it into some crack, and it fell down," suggested Robin.

"It's small wonder that *you* should overlook anything," growled Ken, remembering, suddenly, that it was appropriate for him to be cross.

"Can you read it, Ken? Can you tell what it means?"

"*You* come here," said Ken, who was scowling over the paper.



Robin looked over his shoulder. "4 Teekin oni moame, 50 cts.," she read, slowly, aloud. "I don't know what it means," she said, but then, I shouldn't, of course. "I suppose it's some coloring matter for gl—"

"'Sh-h-h! Do try to remember that it's a great secret!" said Ken.

"I didn't see that on it yesterday," said Robin.

"It doesn't look like the same—"

And then a light flashed upon her—the meaning of those mysterious words! But should she tell Ken?



## CHAPTER IV

"I'd ought to have charged, Thanny," said Cap'n Saul. He had shown his disturbed feelings by short answers and an extreme reserve as soon as they had left their passengers at the bluffs, and as they touched the wharf at Lobster Point they burst forth uncontrollably.

"Ain't you 'shamed now, Saul Baker, to think of such a thing as chargin' Ken and her!" cried Thanny, hotly.

"If it had been them alone I wouldn't, if mackerel was hollerin' to be ketched," said Cap'n Saul; "but I hain't no call to spend my time a-carryin' of them Frenchies round, specially when I know they ain't up to no good, but only a-puttin' of mischief into Ken Dinsmore's head, where there is enough a'ready, jest as there is in any boy's head, accordin' to nater, only some has got sense enough to overbalance it, and some hain't. If Ken and Miss Robin—that ain't nothin' but a gal, anyhow—if they want to stoop to them Frenchies, 'tain't no business of mine, but yet I'd ought to show 'em what I think about it, and chargin' would be a good way. You needn't look kind of sneerin', Thanny Baker; it's more that than 'tis the money, though it's the money consid'able, too. Them Hallett girls and their teacher paid me half a dollar apiece. I said that was enough, considerin' I



was comin', anyhow, and havin' them aboard didn't make no great difference. But how came I there that time and the time before? You needn't say that I fetched up groceries enough for Sears either time to make it pay, because I didn't."

"I wouldn't be so mean to a feller that had got his head stove in," muttered Thanny.

"If he'd been doin' his day's work, instead of goin' down there to get some kind of stuff to blow folks up with, he wouldn't have got his head stove in," said Cap'n Saul. "And 'tain't neither, no more'n mine. I expect he knows jest about as much as ever he did, 'n' that ain't no great."

"I wisht I knew what that stuff was," said Thanny, forgetting his indignation against his brother in his curiosity.

"So long as we can get stiddy days' works, you and me can get along without no queer stuff out of the 'pothecary's," said Cap'n Saul. "But now you look a - here! I'm jest goin' to make out a bill for that feller's passage, and you've got to carry it over. It's bright moonlight, and it won't take you but a few minutes. I'm so subject to soft spells that I darsen't wait till mornin'. It's my duty to do it, and I'm a-goin' to."

Cap'n Saul sat down at once, without any regard for his supper, after finding a scrap of paper—a scarce commodity in the little house at Lobster Point—and laboriously made out a bill. There were times when even Cap'n Saul wished that he had an "edication," and this was one of them.

"Pothooks and hangers don't come nat'ral to me, and that's a fact," he remarked, mopping his face



with his bandanna handkerchief, after half an hour of labor. "I don't know but you'd have done it better, Thanny; but I don't calc'late there's much amiss with the spellin'. I expect I'm kind of a nat'ral speller, for I never learnt. If folks has got brains they can get along without edication."

"I wouldn't have done it, anyhow," said Thanny, "and I ain't a-goin' to take it over."

But, nevertheless, Thanny did. When Saul's mind was made up, he had found that resistance was useless. He grumbled while he was eating his supper, and he muttered about "mean folks" as he closed the door; but he went.

"I shall be ashamed to look her in the face again," he said to himself as he rowed along. "If I was carryin' it to Annette Freneau, I wouldn't care. She'd ought to be charged. I know what I'll do; I'll take off half of it, then there'll be only fifty cents for bringing him home. Saul will be all over it by to-morrow, and if Ken pays him fifty cents it will be all right; I don't believe he will take that."

So half the bill was torn off, and committed to the waves in little bits between Lobster Point and the bluffs, and it seemed likely that Ken was destined to remain in ignorance of the fact that Cap'n Saul had drawn up a bill against him for carrying Dave Freneau down to Kingstown. The other half of the bill Thanny thrust under the front door without ringing the bell.

"I'm in hopes they've gone to bed or something, and won't find it, and it will get swep' up in the morning," said Thanny to himself, as he turned away, wiping a not unmanly moisture from his eyes



with his sleeve. "I like them folks. I set by 'em all, and I do hate a mean feller," he continued, feeling himself to be as unhappy and ill-used a boy as ever scrambled barefooted down the bluffs.

It happened that the younger members of the family had all gone to bed, and neither Mr. or Mrs. Dinsmore saw the bit of paper at the hall door, and Ken, going down as Robin had meant to go, for one more search for the scrap of paper which the monkey had stolen, swooped eagerly upon this fragment of Cap'n Saul's bill, and had no suspicion of his mistake. "4 Teekin oni moame!" Perhaps it was not remarkable that he could not read it. Cap'n Saul's "nat'ral" spelling was certainly different from "educated" forms. Robin had been completely mystified at first; she had thought that "4 Teekin" must be a certain amount of oxides, or silicates, or perhaps of "*oni moame*," whatever that might be. Perhaps if she had not seen Cap'n Saul's bills before, its true meaning might not have dawned upon her as it did.

"You can't make it out, can you?" said Ken, anxiously. "But of course you can't, if I can't," he added. Ken never liked to admit Robin's superior quickness.

"I don't know anything about such things, you know—drugs and chemical preparations," said Robin, slowly.

"I shall send it down to the apothecary. I must go down; it won't do to risk anything. Of course he will understand this, and it will help him to remember the rest. I feel as if I could hardly wait until morning!"



"Per—perhaps we shall find the—the rest of the paper," suggested Robin.

"I looked everywhere. The monkey probably swallowed it," said Ken. "Don't make me think about it! It's enough to drive a fellow crazy. As if there were not troubles enough in this house without a monkey!"

Robin lingered in the hall after Ken had gone into his room and shut the door. She felt a strong impulse to cry out to Ken that she was deceiving him. She heard him slowly saying over the mysterious words, as if he hoped by many repetitions to discover their meaning, and she could scarcely restrain herself from laughter, which would certainly have ended in tears. She could not explain now, for Ken would be so angry; the one thing that he could not endure was to be "fooled," and made ridiculous. And, after all, if he should discover what the writing meant, he need never know that she had read it almost at once.

The next day was stormy. When Robin looked out of her window, in the gray of the morning, the waves were churning white spray, and tossing it over the Chunks as if they were determined to get rid of the only rocks they found to fret them along the whole cape; and the window-panes were beaten by gusty winds and rain.

Neither the *Mary Ann* nor the *Flying Scud* could go to Kingstown to-day! That was Robin's first thought, and she heaved a little sigh of relief. But she met Ken in the hall with a frown on his face as heavy as the sky's.

"I can't stand it anyway, Robin. I *must* go down



to Kingstown," he said, and there was a tremor in his voice which touched Robin's heart. "I shall walk over to Sandford, and go down on the train. I say, Robin, you have some money, haven't you?"

"Oh, I haven't, Ken dear! The house-keeping money has run short this month, and we've had to piece out in every way," said Robin.

"Of course you would try to hinder me," said Ken, cruelly. "Though one would think you had done about enough. I shall go to my father."

"Don't do that, Ken! he hasn't any, and it will worry him," said Robin, earnestly. "I wouldn't try to hinder you, it is very unjust to say so, although I do think it is better not to depend on great chances like that, which may not amount to anything, especially for a boy. It's so much like gambling! It makes one all—all feverish and discontented. It's better to do just the best one can every day, even in a hard place—we are in a hard place, Ken, for proud people."

"My pride isn't silly, like yours! I don't want you to think it is!" cried Ken. "I don't hustle the twins and Traddles out of the way because they are a little sticky and have outgrown their dresses, and I don't give my mind to covering up the darns on the drawing-room chairs with horrid little tidies, and I wouldn't stay away from the Hallett girls' party because I had only an old dress, and then have my eyes red for a week because I didn't go! And I wouldn't be ashamed of taking people out sailing, and think my brother ought to do it, when he has much more important business—when everybody thinks it's clever for a girl to manage a boat, too."



"I know I'm silly about some things," said Robin, with hot cheeks, "but I'm trying to get over it. And, oh, Ken, if you would try to get over being restless, and study, as papa wants you to!"

"Why don't you try Cap'n Saul's style—'stiddy days' works, and there you be!" It's much more to the point than your girly preaching."

"It's true! what Cap'n Saul says is true!" cried Robin. "If he is a little—well, a little stingy, although it doesn't seem right to say so, for he has always been generous to us."

"I suppose you think it is a good thing that Dave Freneau got injured for life, so that the secret of making a great fortune has slipped away from him, and I shall go fishing for a living, or keep mumbling away at Latin declensions that go in at one ear and out at the other!" said Ken, bitterly.

"How can you say such things, Ken, when I feel so sorry for Dave and Annette, too?" cried Robin. "I can't quite realize that boys like you and him could—could do such great things as you expected," she added, candidly; "but I am sorry enough that the discovery is lost. It seems dreadful that it might have been valuable, when Dave and Annette are so poor that one can hardly see how they are going to get on at all. We *must* help them, Ken!"

"I should like to know how we are going to do it, unless that scrap of paper helps the apothecary to remember the whole. It's easy to stand there preaching. If you were anything like a sister you would get the money for me to go down to Kingstown. Papa trusts everything to you. He would give you the money, and never ask what it was for. And you



won't get it for me—you who made all the trouble by your carelessness. You are just exactly like a girl!" With this climax of reproach Ken went out into the rain, slamming the door behind him.

He looked almost capable of walking to Kingstown. But Robin could not ask her father for money, not even to restore Ken's good-nature. And, moreover, it would be utterly useless for him to go with that scrap of paper. What would he say when some one quicker witted than he, or more accustomed to Cap'n Saul's written dialect, should read it to him? She would be obliged to pretend that she had been deceived also.

"T'anny Baker do be afther bring'n' over a pair o' foine lairge mackerel," said Moira, as Robin entered the kitchen. "He said 'twas his brother sint 'em, but I'm think'n' himsel' was the manes iv it. A big hairt he have in his bit body, and its niver too starmy for him to be do'n' a good turn."

But it was in fact Cap'n Saul, who, repenting before daylight of the bill, which was to work more mischief than he knew, had selected two "stunners" from his catch, and despatched Thanny with them—a peace-offering like Annette's tartine.

"I want to see Thanny. Has he gone?" said Robin, quickly.

"He do be breakin' wood in the shed. Sure ourselves have a roight to break our wood and catch our fish," said Moira, who had her own opinion of "Masther Kin," and was privileged to speak her mind. "And I tould him so, but he says he's wantin' to aise his moind. Now whatever would ail the crathur's bit moind?"



But Robin had gone; she was pushing open the wood-shed door, to find Thanny, with his jacket off, manfully attacking the stoutest among a pile of logs.

"Thanny, don't speak loud; it's very private. Do you know how a bit of paper, something like a bill, in Cap'n Saul's writing, came in our hall?"

"I was hopin' she'd sweep it up," groaned Thanny. "I'd ought to have tore it all up. I wouldn't have fetched it only he made me. He's some stingy right along, Saul is, but when he's uncommon stingy he's always sorry afterwards. I tore off 'for carryin' him down to Kingstown, fifty cents,' and just left 'for takin' on him home, fifty cents.' Saul told me to tell Ken that he kind of made a mistake, and he mustn't think anything about it; there wasn't nothin' to pay. But I don't want to say anything to Ken; he's—he's so kind of sharp when he thinks folks are mean. So I'll jest let you fix it."

"Yes, you can leave it to me," said Robin, eagerly. "I'm afraid we impose on Cap'n Saul, and on you too, Thanny; you're always doing something for us."

"Land—*me!*" cried Thanny, his round freckled face aglow with delight. "I never have such tip-top times as I do when you and me are all hands of the *Mary Ann*, takin' folks out, real skipper fashion, as we did the other day, with a spankin' breeze; but Annette Freneau ain't the style of girl that suits me!" Thanny's face had darkened suddenly, and he shook his head doubtfully.

"Poor Annette! She has so much trouble," said Robin.

"That ain't any reason why she should fire things at folks's heads," said Thanny.



"Cap'n Saul ought to be paid," said Robin, meditatively. "You tell him that I will see that he is."

"You're a-layin' it up!" exclaimed Thanny, dolefully. "And I told him you would. But I don't want to hurt his feelin's tellin' him such a thing as that—that you're a-goin' to pay."

"Ken would want to, I'm sure, if he knew about the bill," said Robin. "I'm afraid we have come to think that the *Flying Scud* almost belongs to us!"

"You won't tell Ken about the bill, will you?" said Thanny, eagerly.

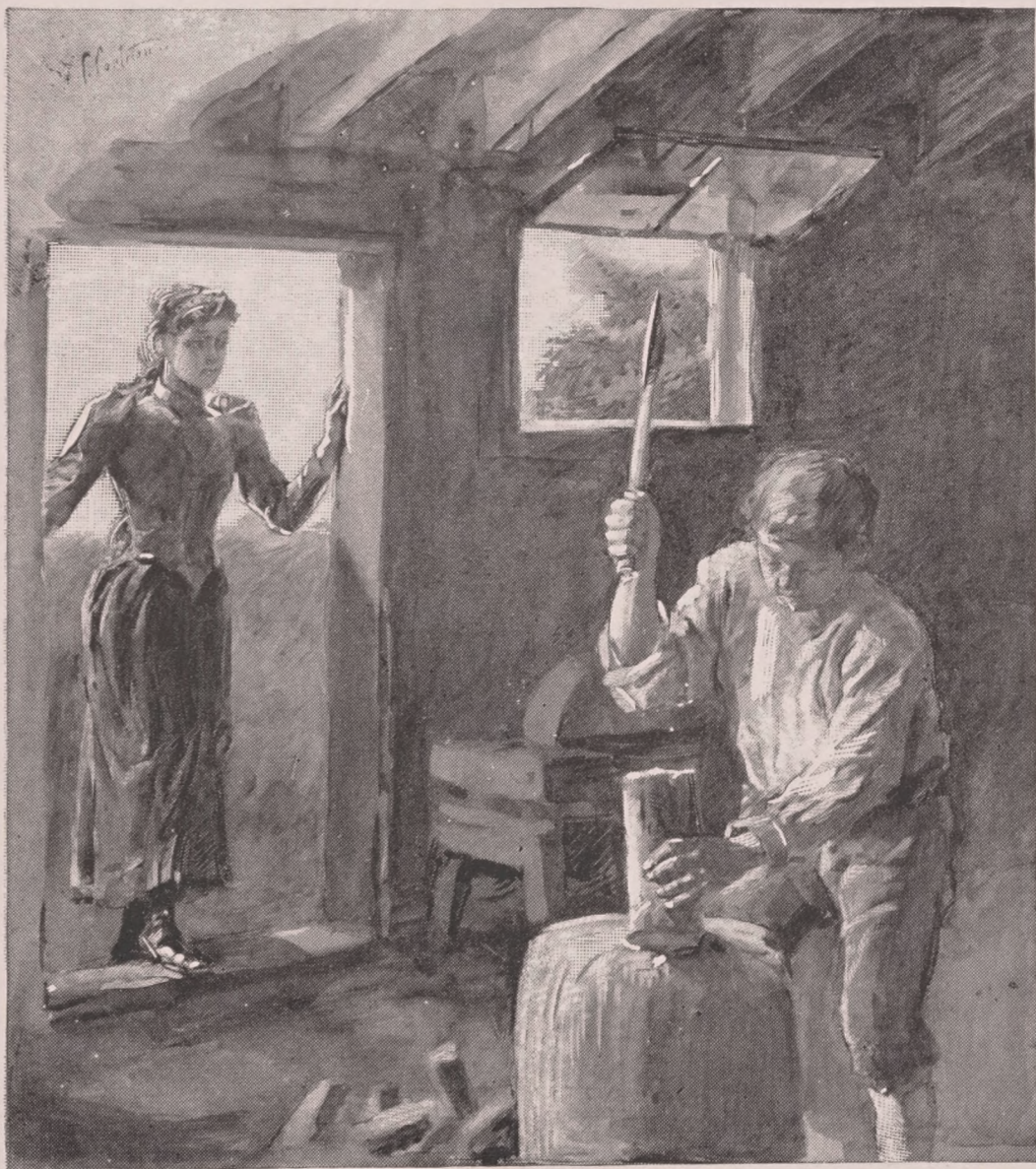
"He may find out, because he has it; he picked it up, but he—he doesn't know what it means. You know, Thanny, Cap'n Saul doesn't spell just like every one." Robin stammered somewhat in the effort to express herself delicately.

"He makes up his own spellin'," said Thanny, not without a touch of pride. "He says book-learnin' ain't of any account, for 'twon't lay up nothin', nor make more'n a hundred cents to a dollar."

"You mustn't think so, Thanny; you must go to school and learn," said Robin, earnestly.

"Saul he wants me to — it's kind of queer, but he does. And I'm to be head of the 'rithmetic class; folks will be apt to cheat you if you don't know 'rithmetic, if Saul does say that he can do all the sums he needs to on the fingers and toes that nater has given him. Say, Miss Robin, did you know there's goin' to be a lightnin' calc'lator to the show that's comin'? And I'm goin' to find out how he does it. Say, do





"SHE FOUND THANNY MANFULLY ATTACKING A PILE OF LOGS."







you s'pose old Freneau knew anything about makin' glass that everybody don't know? He made his boasts, but Saul says 'tain't likely. Hallett & Close — Hallett & Rawlins 'tis now — they've got so much money that they can find out anything. Saul says so. I wisht I knew what Ken and Dave was buyin' to the apothecary's. There's some stuff aboard of the *Scud* now. Ken said it was too dark to take it home last night, and that it wa'n't much use, anyhow. I didn't want to fetch it over, for fear I should get blowed up. Some of it looks like lead, and some of it is kind of shiny, and it don't smell like nothin' at all! I shouldn't wonder a mite if Annette Freneau was a witch."

This last seemingly irrelevant remark Thanny uttered in a tone of strong conviction.

"Thanny! you are as ridiculous as Moira with her fairies. A Yankee boy, too! I'm ashamed of you!" exclaimed Robin.

"Now you jest look a-here, Miss Robin!" said Thanny, earnestly. "When I was a-goin' home from here last night, after fetchin' over the bill, I went aboard the *Scud*, jest to take another look at that stuff, 'cause I couldn't seem to get it out of my mind, and if one of them bottles wa'n't a-shinin' jest like fire-coals! You'd better believe I run. I expected nothin' but what a genii like them in the book that Steve Prettygo lent me would rise right out of it. No, I ain't afraid of a Jack-o'-lantern, like Moira, neither! I know what *they* be; but I never did see stuff in a bottle look as if 'twas afire!"

"I suppose there are chemical preparations that look like that," said Robin, reflectively.



"I'd like to know, but I wouldn't darst to ask Ken; would you?" said Thanny.

"I shouldn't like to, because it's probably a secret," said Robin.

"Oh, Miss Robin, it ain't true, is it, that Granny Nickerson left you her monkey? Moira's always tryin' to fool me," said Thanny, suddenly struck by a new idea.

"Yes, it is true; and, Thanny, she left me her cranberry meadow, too," said Robin, feeling that the friends who often shared her troubles ought to be told of her good-fortune.

"The great big one down by Honeypot Marsh? Gee whittaker! And there's going to be an orfle crop this year. You'll have to look out for 'em. I'll help you." Thanny's cherubic, freckled face fairly shone with delight at the prospect. "But that monkey has got a bad name; he's orfle mischeevous. They say he carried off two ten-dollar bills out of Mr. Sears's money-drawer, and he never found 'em. Most likely he chewed 'em up and swallowed 'em. If he carries anything off you won't never find it. A sailor down to Kingstown was going to give me an orfle nice one once, but Saul wouldn't let me have it. They're real good comp'ny, but there ain't any profit in 'em; that's what Saul says."

Jean appeared at this moment with the monkey perched upon her shoulder; she was followed by the twins and Traddles, an admiring, excited procession.

"Traddles dreamed that he turned into Granny Nickerson, and was a hundred, and blew away, and we didn't have him any more; and she woke up



crying," announced Prim. "Traddles has such very unpolite dreams, I am afraid her mind will trouble her."

The monkey immediately justified Thanny's opinion of his unprofitableness by seizing his hat from his head and climbing with it to a high beam, where he squatted, chattering, and with an evident intention of tearing his trophy to pieces.

Thanny shouted to him sternly in vain, but Robin's happy thought of shaking a stick at him threateningly caused him to toss the hat down dexterously upon Traddles's delighted head, whence Thanny seized it and brushed it with his sleeve, his thrifty little soul full of alarm.

"Monkeys are orfle good comp'ny, but there ain't any profit in 'em," he repeated, earnestly.

Ken did not return to breakfast. Moira somewhat allayed Robin's anxiety by reporting that he had refreshed himself with "the bit and the sup" from the pantry before he went. She thought that he had probably gone down to the Quansett House, where he often spent a day, having acquired a reputation among the guests by his skill at bowls and tennis. But he burst in upon her—she was watching for him in the hall—late in the evening, rain-soaked, and with his face as haggard as such a fresh boy-face could possibly be.

"I have been to Kingstown. How did I get there? Well, I walked part of the way, and borrowed money for the rest. It isn't a nice thing to do; it isn't what a fellow would choose, but I couldn't wait when there was a chance. And I've been fooled! I'm the laughing-stock of the town!" Ken's thin



boyish voice was harsh and shrill. "The whole Cape will ring with it. The writing on that slip of paper was that clown Saul Baker's! I knew it as soon as a fellow in the apothecary's read it to me. 'For takin' on him home, 50 cents.' A bill, I suppose—for me, likely enough. He's capable of it. Why did you say it was a piece of that paper? How queer you look! Did you know what it was, and let me make a fool of myself like that?" Robin shrank from his fierce look and tone, and covered her face with her hand.

"Look me in the face, and tell me whether you knew!" cried Ken.



## CHAPTER V

“You did know! You never thought it was a piece of that paper. You *pretended* that it was, and let me go and make a donkey, a perfect jackass of myself!” cried Ken, growing more furious as he rehearsed his wrongs. “I wish I had told that grinning apothecary what I thought of him—when he knew it wasn’t a laughing matter, too. I told him enough about it for him to know that—more than I wish I had. On the way I took it over to Dave, and puzzled his poor weak brains over it. He can read letters and figures; I was afraid he couldn’t, but he can. If I had had that paper that you let that girl throw overboard, and then let the monkey tear to pieces, I believe I could have made him remember! Now of course he never will get well, after being tormented by that drivel, ‘4 Teckin’ oni moame!’ There’s English for you. How should a fellow know what it meant? That apothecary said that a man in his line got accustomed to queer spelling. The minute he read it out I knew it was Saul Baker. I should like to know whether it’s a bill, and whether he meant it for me. How came *you* to know what it meant? Or did you only know that it wasn’t that paper? You knew just what it was! I remember, now, that you looked as if you wanted to laugh. Yes, you wanted to laugh, you were fooling me so



beautifully! A pretty sister you are for a boy to have!"

"Oh Ken, I—I didn't know just at first," stammered Robin, "and when I did, I hated to disappoint you, and you were so angry with me that I felt as if I couldn't tell you. I didn't know that you were going to show it to any one. I thought the storm would prevent. I wouldn't have let you do that, Ken. I meant to tell you. It is too bad!"

"It is *too bad*!" mimicked Ken. "That's what a girl says when she has ruined everything. Just wait till I catch that Saul Baker! A great girl you are to complain of my associating with Dave Freneau when you make such friends of those Bakers!"

"They've been so kind to us, Ken," said Robin. "The *Scud* has been like our own boat. And what could I do with the *Mary Ann* if it were not for Thanny?"

"Oh, well, if they're your sort! You're always copying Saul's maxims—'Stiddy days' works and there you be.' I suppose you'll be copying his spelling presently," said Ken, conscious, in spite of his unhappiness, of some satisfaction in what he felt was very neat sarcasm. "As for me, I've done with them. I've done with *you*, too." Ken's look and tone were withering, as he said this, and poor Robin shrank visibly. "If I should stay here I would never speak to you. But I sha'n't stay. And if anybody knows where I've gone it won't be you."

Ken had an irritating consciousness that there was an unmanly tremor in his voice, but to Robin it was only the more impressive on this account. Robin



felt crushed and guilty, but nevertheless she rallied for a little self-defence.

"It was silly of me and—and weak, but I only wanted you not to be angry."

"To be weak sometimes is to be wicked," said Ken, with some dramatic effect. (Declamation was Ken's strong point; he came brilliantly to the front on school exhibition days.) He had read that in a book, thought Robin, recognizing the sentiment as one which had struck her in a story that they had both been reading, and it was consequently not so effective as Ken's original reproaches were apt to be. She could have found the spirit to answer it, if Ken had given her an opportunity, but he ran up-stairs and locked himself in his own room.

Robin was obliged to explain to his father that Ken had been out in the rain, and was tired and wet. Mr. Dinsmore asked few questions of late, he had grown so feeble, and to-night it was a relief to Robin to escape easily.

"Poor dear boy, he has such a hard time!" his mother said; but she never asked for explanations; they were apt to give one neuralgia.

Half an hour later Robin set down a little tray at his door and tapped gently; but there was no response.

"Go away! I know it's you," growled Ken, when she tapped again.

"The clam-chowder was so good, Ken, and it's hot," said Robin, persuasively. "And I made such a cup of coffee!"

"Clear out with 'em!" cried Ken, in a way which reminded Robin strongly of Annette's "*va-t'en*."



She slipped away, leaving the tray at the door, and, listening in her own room, was soon gratified by hearing Ken softly open and shut the door. She was acquainted with Ken, and she knew that the tray was gone.

"It takes the backbone out of a fellow to be so awfully hungry," Ken was saying to himself. "And it's only Robin, anyway."

Nevertheless he left a little of the coffee; he had meant to leave more, but it was too good; and setting the tray outside the door again, he carefully upset the cup, and spilled the coffee. "Now she'll think that Granny Nickerson's Banquo ate the chowder," he said to himself, with great satisfaction. "After all, there are some advantages about having a silly little thing like Robin for a sister."

Robin listened at his door in the chill of the early morning. She was terribly afraid that he would now, in the first flush of his disappointment, carry out his oft-repeated threat to run away to sea. Captain Doane's brig, the *Steadfast*, was to sail soon from Quansett, on a foreign voyage. It might sail that very morning. But the sound of heavy, regular breathing from Ken's room assured her that he was fast asleep.

"I don't believe he'll go until he is sure that Dave Freneau won't get well," she said to herself, as she crept back to bed. "And there's the great show that's coming to Quansett. He has seemed to think as much about it as if he were a Cape boy, almost as much as Thanny, who has been planning and planning how to see it without spending his money. He won't go away; he's only trying to frighten me." And





“KEN SOFTLY OPENED AND SHUT THE DOOR.”







Robin fell asleep again, almost as comfortably as a girl who hasn't the great responsibility of a brother. But she dreamed that Adam had turned into a Jack-o'-lantern; he had a candle inside his grinning skull, like the pumpkin Jack-o'-lanterns which the boys made in the fall, and he was whisking along before her through Honeypot Marsh, waving the lost scrap of paper tantalizingly before her, until suddenly there was nothing left of him but Thanny's hat, which had a frill of lace, like the pretty little bonnet which she had wished to buy for Traddles at Kingstown. "My dreams are getting to be as unpolite as Traddles's, and I shall worry myself out of my mind about those boys' schemes. I will do my best, and think nothing more about what I can't help. 'Stiddy days' works and there you be.' I think Cap'n Saul is a philosopher."

Ken was, after all, not much crosser the next morning than he was in the habit of being of late. He carried out his threat not to speak to Robin, but he was so glum generally that this was scarcely noticeable. He objected strongly to going to Granny Nickerson's funeral, and was only constrained by his father's positive command that such respect should be shown to her memory. To Ken's mind the cranberry meadow was so far overbalanced by the monkey and his misdeeds that no gratitude was due from the Dinsmore family to Granny Nickerson. He went by himself, surlily, in his flannel blouse and knickerbockers. "A fellow couldn't be expected to dress up," he said to himself, "when all his prospects in life had been ruined by that monkey;" while Robin was escorted by Thanny—Thanny abnormally brushed and



combed, ill at ease in his Sunday clothes, and burdened with two regrets.

"I never picked up her cane nor her bundle for her, one day, when she dropped 'em," he explained to Robin, as they drew near the house. "I was goin' smeltin', and the fellers were all crowdin' round the best hole in the ice. I don' know why 'tis, but a feller thinks of it, and wishes he had, now she's dead." And Thanny gave expression to his feelings in as honest a sigh as was heaved for Granny Nickerson, whose kindred had all died before her. "There's another thing that I'm sorry for, too—that I never see moonshine through her," added Thanny, the boy in him coming to the front after his momentary lapse into sentiment. "'Bednego Phillups he says that when folks gets to be a hundred you can see moonshine through 'em jest as plain. He see through Granny Nickerson."

"Thanny, don't talk such nonsense!" said Robin, severely.

"No'm," said Thanny, submissively, but evidently not relinquishing his opinion that 'Bednego Phillups had had enviable experiences.

He came over to the bluffs that evening, restored to his every-day clothes, and in a more than ordinarily cheerful state of mind, which he manifested by turning several somersets as he came in sight of the tennis-court where the young Dinsmores were all gathered—all except Ken, who was swinging in a hammock on the piazza with his cap over his eyes.

The sight of Thanny's small legs wildly waving against the sunset sky was followed by a gay shout from Thanny,



"The show's comin' to-morrer!"

The show had been heralded for a long time by tantalizing placards on the fences and advertisements in the newspapers; but there had been unaccountable delays and unavoidable postponements.

"It ain't just a common circus," explained Thanny, still breathless, as he approached the group. "It's an intellectyal show. There's a Lightnin' Calc'lator, and I'm a-goin' to find out just how he does it. There's wax figgers, and a Fat Lady, and a Skeleton, and some Wild Men from Borneo, and a man that writes with his toes, and a Lion Tamer, and a Snake Charmer—I'm a-goin' to find out how *they* do it. And some say the Lightnin' Calc'lator is a-goin' to leave 'cause he wanted to do all the intellectyal part, and now they've been and got an Educated Goat; and oh, how I wisht I could take his place!"

"A heavy Lightning Calculator you'd make, Thanny!" laughed Ken. "How long since you got out of the multiplication table?"

"I'm in cube-root," said Thanny, indignantly; "and you'd ought to hear me do sums in my head. If I just had a chance to find out how he does it, you'd see. Anyhow, I've got to get some kind of a job there. Fifty cents a ticket, twenty-five cents under thirteen, and no compliment'ries! Saul says we can't stand such prices more'n once, anyhow. Some fellers peek, and some crawl under, but I wouldn't. I did crawl under once when I was a little feller, and didn't know 'twas mean. Miss Robin she says 'tis. Anyhow, they're so strict now that you can't get a chance to. And there ain't many jobs that a feller



can get; they have folks belongin' to the comp'ny to do everything. 'Lando Briggs he's got the start of me. He went away up to Menauket to get the chance of distributin' handbills. Last show that come round he got a chance to blow up the Fat Lady—most of her was Injy-rubber, and she had to be blowed up jest like a balloon. I was goin' to try for that job with this show—'Lando got a free pass, and a lot of compliment'ries—but this one she's truly fat!"

Thanny sighed, with a deep sense of the vanity of earthly hopes.

"I don't b'lieve they're truly wild men from Borneo," he continued, after a moment of reflection. "Once there was a show over to Deepmouth, and the wild man wa'n't nobody but Jake Pingree's cousin, that used to live down here to the Cape. He wa'n't nothin' but jest a common boy like me, that went fishin' and done jobs, and he got to be a wild man in a show! Saul says he'd rather be President, but I wouldn't."

"Thanny, how can you, when its pretending—when it isn't honest at all!" said Robin, reprov-  
ingly.

"He was a tip-top wild man—jest as good as if he was born so," said Thanny, in an aggrieved tone. "If a feller feels that he's got talents for anything he'd ought to use 'em—that's what the minister says; and sometimes I feel jest exactly as if I had talents for bein' a wild man or something or other in a show. There *is* talents down here to the Cape. Mary Lizzie Brewster's own aunt used to ride on the whale in the 'quarial gardens up to Boston, when she



was a girl. She was orfle celebrated. I've saw her and spoke to her myself," said Thanny, thrilled with honest pride.

"Robin thinks shows are common; but then she thinks 'most everything is," said Jean, with an evident sense of injury. "I think they're nice."

There was a chorus of assent from the younger ones, although Prim qualified her share by saying she thought Traddles ought not to be allowed to think it was Sunday-school, as she did last year.

"Ken said he'd like to go off with a show, anyhow," said Thanny, in whose bosom Robin's evident scorn of his tastes was still rankling. "I heard him tell Don Samson so. He said 'twas a chance to see the world, at any rate, and better'n stayin' in this poky little hole."

Thanny lowered his voice. Ken might resent being quoted, for he was inclined to be irritable in these days; but he was swinging lazily in his hammock, apparently listening to nothing.

"But it's hard to get a job that will let you in, to say nothin' of gettin' a chance to b'long," added Thanny, gloomily. "Dave Freneau got a chance to take tickets last year; 'twas on account of that French Canadian that had the charge of the ponies. They've got a lot of them chunky little Canadian ponies this year, so 'Bednego Phillups says, but there ain't no Frenchman."

"I never thought of that!" Ken was sitting up, wide awake and alert. "I'll take Dave to the show. The doctor said some association of ideas might suddenly bring back his memory. Anyway, he said it would be well to amuse and interest him."



Thanny murmured that he should think "it might be kind of interestin' to live 'long of Annette," but no one took any notice of him.

"I would take him, Ken," said Robin, who tried to ignore Ken's displeasure against herself.

"I wasn't talking to you," said Ken, crossly, as he swung himself out of the hammock, and took to the road in the direction of Honeypot Marsh.

"Say, Ken's took that stuff out of the *Scud's* cabin and put it up in the carriage-house chamber. I helped him this mornin'. If you should happen to see something a-shinin' like fire-coals— I wisht I knew what them boys was up to. But Dave Freneau won't ever know much again; that's what folks say. A little knock like that wouldn't hardly have made a Cape feller see stars! I should think he might have got used to seein' stars livin' 'long of Annette. She chased Tommy Sears with the pok— Well, I ain't a-goin' to say nothin' about her, anyhow. Some fellers can't get along with girls, and mebbe that's the way with me."

The chorus of dissent to this modest view of his adaptability which immediately arose from the children caused Thanny's freckled face to glow with pleasure.

"I like 'em, I like 'em real well," he declared. "And—and them that fires things at folks's heads *means* well, I expect."

With this noble renunciation of his prejudice against Annette, Thanny took himself off in the direction of Quansett, where fascinating preparations for the show were in progress.

Ken did not take Dave to the show the next day;



Annette objected, because he was so weak, and Annette's objections were apt to be too forcible for even Ken's persistence to overcome. Dave slept much of the time, and remained dazed and stupid when he was awake. This Robin learned not from Ken, who was steadfast to his cruel resolution not to speak to her, but from Annette herself when she went down to the marsh the next morning, carrying from the simple and not over-abundant stores in Moira's pantry those things of which she thought Annette and Dave might be most in need.

"He is like a stranger; he is not my Dave at all," repeated poor Annette over and over, with pitiful tears. "And I cannot go to work. I dare not leave him. What will keep us from starve?"

Robin told her, as persuasively as possible, of Duke, and his wish to help them.

"The son of that man who have try to cheat my poor father? Nevair!" cried Annette, with a terrible rolling of r's. "I will let Dave starve first. He would wish it!"

"But he is such a nice boy, Annette!" said Robin, warmly. "And he is lame; he has hip-disease, and suffers all the time, and that makes him think of others who have trouble."

"I am glad if he have trouble!" cried Annette, with flashing eyes. "Yes, I am glad, and you need not look at me like that! If you have seen your father wrong out of what was his life, and die too worn out when he come near to get it at last—and now Dave is almost the same as die, and it is all lost!" Annette grew incoherent and tearful; it was plain that remonstrances were of no avail.



"Duke isn't to blame for all that, you know, Annette," she said, gently. "But I'll do all I can to help you."

"You are good; you would, I know, but Dave and I we will burden no one. While the summer lasts we can go on. We have the potato-patch, the little pease, and berries in the woods."

"And we will go fishing, you and I, in the *Mary Ann*," said Robin.

"You make it so that it is no favor that I take," said Annette. "Those others" — Annette nodded significantly in the direction of Sandford — "those others do favor, but they look down. I go fishing with you in the *Marie Ann*."

Annette said this loftily, with the air of conferring a favor, but there was a sob in her throat. "She have a good heart, and the tartine have go to it!" she said to herself, as she watched Robin's retreating figure from the doorway.

Robin had not seen Dave; he was asleep, but she had seen a child's cart full of stones in the yard, and Annette had told her, tearfully, that Dave had found it in the cellar and occupied himself, in most of his waking moments, in drawing it up and down.

"The doctor have say he get over that when he grow stronger," she explained. "The great doctor have come up from Kingstown, and he ask no pay, because he is interested. It is good sign and not bad for Dave to draw the cart, but he must not see me cry. I laugh always, like this, when Dave is awake!" Annette displayed all her dazzling teeth in a grin so forced that it seemed doubtful whether it could have a cheering effect upon Dave.



"He take more notice, a little, than the first day, but he must not get tired. I will not let him go to the show, and your brother put himself in temper. He say he do not like girls, anyway. That to me is equal whether he like girls or not, but he shall not tire my Dave."

On the last day of the show Ken obtained the doctor's permission and Annette's to take Dave to see the chunky little Canadian ponies. Annette insisted upon going also, not from lightness of heart—that seemed over for poor Annette—but because she could not trust Dave out of her sight. The expense of the outing, which, it must be confessed, had been a matter of serious embarrassment to Ken, was provided from a wholly unexpected quarter.

Cap'n Saul came up the steep sandy path from the slip with the rolling gait which he had acquired before he was twelve years old, and a sheepish look on his face, which was quite new to it. Thanny, who knew the weak points in his armor, as we all know those of our own kin, had by continual sly thrusts aroused him to deepest penitence.

"They ain't makin' any ice-cream or frozen pud-d'n' over to the minister's nowadays. I expect that means that they're orfle short. I don't expect they ever made a mite without sendin' us some. 'Heap it up, Moira,' Miss Robin used to say, when it was going into my pail. 'Cap'n Saul and Thanny both have a sweet tooth.'"

Cap'n Saul and Thanny cooked for themselves in untrained, masculine ways, and these delicacies had been extremely welcome.

"She always makes me take my share of the



money, reg'lar, Miss Robin does, when we take folks out in the *Mary Ann*. And I don't want to, neither. There ain't anything mean about *some folks*."

With such keen thrusts did sly Thanny arouse his elder brother to repentance.

"I was kind of thinkin' that seein' that French feller got hurt aboard of my boat, mebbe I'd ought to do a little something for him," he said, giving a sailor hitch to his trousers, and with his eyes on the ground, but addressing Ken, whom he met on the lawn, while Robin listened with all her ears from her perch on the piazza railing. "I wouldn't want to give a dollar where it wouldn't be put to a good use, but—but I had one layin' round kind of permisc'us in my pocket, and hearin' you was thinkin' of takin' him to the show, I kind of thought—"

Cap'n Saul at this point extended a silver dollar. "There ain't no profit in shows, generally speakin', but Thanny was tellin' me that you calc'lated it might set his thinkin'-machine to workin' again—and so there 'tis."

He thrust the silver dollar into Ken's somewhat reluctant hand, and rolled away at great speed.

"A fellow wouldn't take it from that old curmudgeon if he had a sixpence that he could call his own. The idea of making out a bill for taking Dave on his old boat when he was going anyway," growled Ken, as he came slowly up the steps. "And a pretty fix he got me into by it, too! I don't know how a fellow can bear all that I have to without going out of his mind. To have to cringe to people to borrow money, and to take it from a fellow like that!"

"Ken, dear, it is too—"



"I wasn't talking to you," said Ken, savagely, suddenly remembering himself. "I was talking to—"

Alas! there was no one to represent a listener except Traddles's great Dinah, staring, beady-eyed and wooden, on the upper step.

As Ken's searching gaze fell on the doll, Robin's unfortunately quick sense of humor caused her mouth to twitch.

"Laugh! Oh yes, laugh away!" cried Ken, furiously. "What do you care what your own brother has to suffer? and all your doing, too. But you'll think of it again! I'm going to do something *desperate*. I'm not going to live like a beggar any longer—*desperate*, I tell you, and you won't laugh when you hear of it!"



## CHAPTER VI

KEN very often threatened to run away. Doubtless that was what he meant by doing something desperate. Robin, like the "bonny, bonny lass" in the song, was told "many a tale of the dangers of the sea." Ken had used this way of persuading her to do what he wished almost as long as she could remember—long before they came to the Cape, where such ample opportunities were offered of putting his threat into execution. Like the boy who cried "Wolf!" so often that at length no one paid any attention when the wolf really came, Ken had weakened the effect of his threat by repetition.

"He doesn't mean anything, and I won't worry any more about it. I really was afraid that he and Dave Freneau would go, and all the time they were planning something quite different," Robin said to herself. "Poor Ken! he has had a great deal to vex him, but I think he isn't going to keep cross a great while. He can't help speaking to me."

Robin took the twins and Traddles to the show on that same afternoon when the effort was made to stimulate poor Dave's "thinking-machine" by means of the Canadian ponies. Jean was going also, and was in high glee in consequence. Robin wished that Moira could have taken the children, for Jean's accusation that she thought shows were "common"





"ROBIN TOOK THE TWINS AND TRADDLES TO THE SHOW."







was true. Moreover, she had nothing to wear, except her old gray mohair, which had faded in streaks, and Jean's dress was almost up to her knees—Jean grew so inconsiderately—and darned, of course; Jean's dresses were always darned. But Moira was too old, now, to be trusted to take them, and, moreover, had been seized with terror at sight of the lion, retreating to the remotest corner of her attic closet when he went by, mildly roaring in his cage, between the ponderous elephant and the zebra—the latter an animal of the most peculiar appearance, which Than-y shrewdly suspected to have been painted. "He looks just like a barber's pole, and he ain't no jography zebra, anyhow," he stoutly maintained.

Traddles, for her part, was strongly convinced that God had not made the elephant, he was so clumsy and unfinished; to all Prim's reproofs she replied that God could certainly have made a better one. It came to be the generally accepted opinion in the nursery that God had made him, but merely for a pattern, and that on this account the show-man had secured him at a bargain.

With curiosity thus aroused to a fever-heat by the passing of the procession, of course the children were uproarious to see the show, and "The poor little hearts had so few pleasures Robin must certainly take them," their mother said. So Robin sat up half the night with Moira making the little darned and patched white frocks presentable, and with just enough money in her pocket for four half-tickets and one whole one—how good a thing it was that Jean was still under thirteen!—she set out with the whole flock for the show. And although care might perch



upon one's shoulder, and circuses might seem vulgar, there was, nevertheless, some fun in them when one was only fifteen. One could not help wishing to see the horses, especially the lovely little Shetland ponies, and the curious old camel, so associated in Traddles's mind with Biblical illustrations that Prim was obliged to labor with her still further to remove the impression that she was going to Sunday-school. There was a certain dreadful fascination about the snake-charming, and one would like to discover, as Thanny meant to do, whether the zebra were really painted, and if so how they did it.

And Jean, oblivious of shabby clothes, was so wholly joyous, and the little ones so full of glee, that no sympathetic soul could help sharing their feelings, although poverty might pinch and brothers threaten to run away.

Ken, who would have scorned in any case to appear in public with "the youngsters," as he called them, had gone to Honeypot Marsh to take Dave to the show — Dave, who could now walk apparently as well as ever, although his mental condition was not improved. They happened to find places near together in the democracy of the unreserved seats, and Robin forgot all the attractions of the show in watching Dave. He was interested, delighted, as gleeful as the twins and Traddles, over the performances of the trick ponies and the educated goat that looked like a wise old patriarch in his long beard. But when Ken talked to him, pointing out the chunky little Canadian ponies, in which at the previous show his interest had all been centred, because they reminded him of a Canadian village



where he had once lived, his face became blank, and he was utterly unresponsive.

Robin watched Ken's face, regardless of all the charms of the performance, and her heart sank at sight of his disappointment. She knew that he was saying to himself that all effort was useless; Dave would never remember. If he would only give up the hope, now and altogether, of that great fortune which Freneau's discovery was expected to bring, and do his best bravely! But Robin realized, with a great sigh, that such wisdom could scarcely be expected of Ken. He would be much more likely to think that the time had come for his desperate deed, whatever that might be. It was probably running away to sea on board a whaler, where great hardships were still suffered, or on a fisherman to the Banks, from which so many sailors never came home. The gay scene faded from before Robin's eyes, and dreadful shipwrecks took its place, until Annette's shrill laughter aroused her again to reality. Annette was boisterously gleeful, until a sudden recollection would cause her to turn to Dave, and his altered manner would seem to strike her with new force after the short forgetfulness.

She was wild with delight over the ponies. "See, see, Dave! Is he not the very image of Mouchard, the little fat one with the blue cockade? Surely you remember Mouchard and the little cart that carried us to market."

But Dave was puzzled and impatient; he preferred the snakes and the lion to the ponies, and evidently saw no reason why he should be expected to share Annette's interest in them. Annette threatened to



become hysterical, loudly declaring in piteous tones that he was not her Dave at all, and attracting the attention of every one. Poor Ken! he looked completely exasperated. This was far worse than appearing in public with the twins and Traddles, who, indeed, with Prim in the middle, were models of deportment, with all their delight. Ken would certainly go away and leave them, when all eyes began to turn towards them, if it were not for his loyalty to Dave, thought Robin.

Thanny, who, by being on the grounds since early morning, had found "a job," for which he was paid with an admission ticket, but who had been too late to secure a seat, had wandered into the vicinity of his friends, and stood staring, open-mouthed, at Annette. "Say, Ken had better get 'em away," he said, in a whisper, leaning across several people to speak to Robin. "She'll holler out so'st there'll be a regular panic, or else she'll fire something at somebody's head!"

"Can't you ask her to be quiet, Thanny? If I could only get there! Ken looks so distressed!" said Robin.

"Land sakes! she wouldn't shet up for me," said Thanny, in great alarm. "I wouldn't darst to go nigh her no more'n I'd darst go into the cage with that lion, nor half so much. Ken, he's orfle fool-hardy. Neither of them ain't right in their heads. If any Cape feller had got a little knock like that it wouldn't have put him out a mite. Say, she's behavin' better now; she's all took up with the clown and the goat a-dancin'." Thanny was "took up" with this performance for some time himself, but



before it was done he leaned over to Robin again for further conversation. "Say, Dave Freneau will have to go to the idiot school; everybody says so. They wouldn't hire either of 'em at the glass-works, anyhow. The new manager has come, and he's orfle particular. He's worked for Mr. Rawlins for ten years, and he knows more about glass than any other man in this country. He's goin' to make things hum!"

Robin looked anxiously at Dave Freneau, and found too much intelligence in his face to admit to herself that Thanny's prophecy would prove true. But when he looked away from the clown and the goat a dull, blank expression came over his face; he looked at her as if he had never seen her. If this dulness should increase, if memory should fail more and more—oh, poor Annette, whose heart was so bound up in him, how would she bear it?

These were melancholy thoughts to entertain while the educated goat was performing his funny tricks and the clown cracking his jokes. Thanny, who was hard-hearted where Annette Freneau was concerned, was already occupied with livelier interests. "Say, you jest give a good look at that lion!" he said, eagerly, to Robin, at the first opportunity. "You jest hear how kind of soft and reg'lar he roars! And 'Bednego Phillups he offered 'em a quarter to let him jest take hold and pull his tail a little mite, and they wouldn't do it. They said 'twas 'cause he was so ferocious, but don't you b'lieve no such a thing. *It's 'cause he's stuffed!*" Thanny's voice sank to a thrilling whisper. "And they wind him up to make him roar. 'Taint no blood-curdlin' roar, same as the bills



say it is; it ain't a half-decent roar. The feller jest gets into the cage, and yanks round that old stuffed thing, and they call it lion-tamin'. It's an orfle sell; it's the biggest sell that ever come here to Quansett, and me and 'Bednego Phillups are goin' to hiss when the lion comes on. Oh, say, I forgot to tell you; them Hallett girls are up there in the reserved seats, 'way up in front. They asked me if you and Ken was here, and they wanted to get where you and Ken was, because they was alone, and they was kind of scared. They needn't be; there ain't nothin' to hurt 'em." Thanny's tone was slightly tinged with contempt. "And that big one is as much as fifteen. They wanted me to ask some folks back here close to you to change seats with 'em. Annette's carryin' on so, and then havin' that lion on my mind, drove it right out of my head. There they be, standin' up and beck'nin', now. I expect they've been doin' it right along, but Annette made everybody stare over here so that I never noticed 'em. I expect I'd better ask the Patten boys, right alongside here, to change with 'em; they'll be glad enough to get up into the reserved seats, and them girls *be* Hallett's daughters; that's what Saul would say."

"Yes, you must, Thanny," said Robin; but she said it somewhat faintly. She wondered that she had not seen the girls, they were so conspicuous in their finery. They would take in at a glance every detail of her shabbiness and Jean's, their eyes were so keen for such matters; they would even know that Traddles's dress was made out of Jean's old barred muslin, and that Jean's blue feather, which,



in its wearer's eyes, was sufficient to glorify great poverty of apparel, was her own old white one dyed. It was ignoble to be ashamed of these things. Robin was conscious of it, but nevertheless the mortification remained. Happy Jean, who could greet the Hallett girls with no feeling except that good-comradeship was an addition to the delight she was already enjoying, and, perhaps incidentally, that it was gratifying to have them see her blue feather.

Thanny escorted the Hallett girls to the seats near Robin (the Patten boys having been more than willing to make the exchange), not without some sheepishness, and much anxiety lest the suspected lion, at which he meant to hiss, should appear before he got them seated. Thanny wore shoes for this occasion—an elaboration of costume which made him feel that the eyes of the whole audience were upon him; they squeaked, being new, and Thanny's face grew red; he felt that he could be master of the situation, even in escorting girls, if it were not for this embarrassment of full dress.

The Hallett girls were gay and voluble, as usual; they had the twins moved so that they might sit one on each side of Robin, and they talked so loud that the people near them, who wished to listen to the clown's jokes, frowned severely upon them.

"We're all alone—just think of it!" said Martha.

"Just think of it!" echoed Julia, at Robin's other hand.

"Miss Ferris thinks it's vulgar to go to a circus."

"She thinks everything is vulgar that's nice," interpolated Julia.

"And papa wouldn't let us come," continued Mar-



tha. "He said there would be a rough set here. You know there is trouble at the works; the men want more pay, or less work, or something."

"They always want something," said Julia.

"And things have been worse since that man of Mr. Rawlins's came. He's for making stricter rules and cutting down their pay. Papa says he has been too easy with them. He is glad to get somebody that will help him make them toe the mark. But I think he is afraid, too, that there'll be a regular strike. Some of the men wouldn't work to-day. They went off without leave, and they are most of them here in the tent. That's why papa didn't want us to come; he said the men would be sure to come here. But I don't see what harm they could do us. They always mutter and scowl a little when we go by, but I'm used to that—I don't mind it at all," said Martha, serenely.

"I liked it better when the workmen were all friendly, and papa didn't seem to want to make so much money. When we were little the men used to like us, and were glad to have us come into the works. I liked it a great deal better than I do to have them hate us so," said Julia, with feeling.

"I don't see what difference it makes," said Martha. "They don't dare do anything, because it would take the bread out of their mouths. I'm glad papa has a new partner; old Mr. Close was too easy. Oh, you *must* come over to our lawn-party; we are going to give it for the Rawlinses; there are so few girls that we care to invite; though this time we are going to have some of the large girls; for Peggy Rawlins, she is very grown up, even for sixteen.



Do you think she is stylish? Do you know Becky Gifford met them when she was abroad with her aunt? Now the Giffords will entertain them, and we sha'n't be anywhere. Mamma never will take any pains to outshine people, and she wants to keep us little girls."

"Do see those men glowering at us!" said Julia, nervously; "and the younger ones behind are jeering and pointing; they don't seem to care how they behave."

"Never mind—looks won't hurt us. They're tired of the clown; when something new comes on they'll forget all about us," said Martha, philosophically. "Julia is such a goose; she can't be happy unless every one likes her. As if it signified about those workmen! They don't like any one, because they're poor. Papa says let them work and save and get rich, as he did. Did you know that the workmen are getting up a subscription for Dave Freneau? They say he'll always be foolish."

"I think it was good of Ken to bring him here; but how awfully sober he looks—Ken, I mean," said Julia. "I've tried and tried to make him look at me, and he won't. Does he have to take that girl round everywhere? It's well enough to be kind to the boy, but I think that girl is horrid. She was really rude to us when we carried her and her brother home that night. She said she 'wished I would shut up' when I asked her some questions about Dave's getting hurt, and why he wasn't attending to his work instead of going off down to Kingstown. And she didn't even say thank you."

"I'm afraid she doesn't know very well how to behave, poor Annette!" said Robin, apologetically.



"He can go to some institution, and she'll be well enough off," said Martha, carelessly. "No, I'm not heartless, Ju. Of course those people don't feel like—like other people; and if he is foolish she can't care much for him. Do you suppose Ken will come to our lawn-party? Boys are so disagreeable about parties! If they come, they won't dance; they just stand round and look foolish. I must make Ken promise— Oh, what is the matter?"

The matter was that the lion of Thanny's suspicions had appeared in his cage, and was greeted with shouts and hisses, with jeers and groans. There was a large element in the audience which, finding the performance somewhat tame, eagerly took the cue from the two boys, who had only meant to express their righteous disapproval of a sham by a few hisses, and raised an uproar which caused its originators to turn pale.

The lion-tamer stood before the cage door in his fantastic dress, trying vainly to make himself heard above the tumult. He was heard to call the lion "a furious beast," and a voice shouted, "He ain't nothin' but an old pin-cushion!" "Wind him up again! his roar is givin' out!" "'Tain't a roar at all! They got things mixed up in the toy-shop, and put a lamb's bleat inside of him!" "I say, fellers, let's make a hole in him and see the sawdust fly!"

Each new sally was received with as great an outburst of applause as if it were the choicest wit. The din became deafening—a mixture of hisses, whistles, catcalls, and shouts. There was a rush towards the lion's cage, and in a moment the whole audience



was on its feet, in the wildest disorder. The screams of frightened women and children added to the uproar.

"Oh, let's get out quick! We shall be killed!" cried Julia Hallett.

"Stay where you are!" called Ken. And Robin, with her frightened brood gathered close to her, stood trembling and uncertain.

"There's the new manager, Carlsen! he will take care of us," cried Martha.

A middle-aged man, with little sharp eyes set in a heavy face, turned quickly towards them at Martha's call.

"It is a good-natured crowd. If you keep quiet, I think there is no danger," he said.

Ken, with his charges, had moved towards his sisters as far as possible, and Carlsen now caught sight of the party.

"Ah! Dave Freneau, an old friend of mine, and just the same old sixpence, I dare say!" he said, cordially extending his hand. "Don't you know me, Dave?"

Dave, who had looked with unterrified wonder at the shouting crowds, gazed for a moment at the man as if he were spellbound, and then shrank back, pale and terror-stricken.

"Take me away from him! take me away!" he gasped, clinging pitifully to Ken.

"He knows him—he knows him!" cried Ken, his face lighting up, and with a joyful ring in his voice.

Carlsen had gone on towards one of the entrances, escorting the Hallett girls, and Robin and Jean fol-



lowed with the little ones. Robin heard Annette say, as people crowded between them:

"It is no wonder that he know him! The bad man who have tried to steal from my father the great work that he do!"

"He remembers! don't you see what that means?" said Ken.

Robin felt a thrill of pleasure, even in the midst of her anxiety, at the sound of Ken's voice, it was so full of hope. The greater part of the crowd had pushed by them up to the front, and there was wild confusion in the ring. The lion had been hastily withdrawn before the threatened loss of sawdust could befall him, and the manager was endeavoring to make a speech. Robin was drawing a long breath of relief, when some rough-looking young men jostled and pushed the Hallett girls, as if on purpose, and knocked Jean's hat, with the precious blue feather, completely off her head.

"Wasn't that dreadful? I was really faint!" gasped Julia, as they emerged safely into the open air. "If ever I go to such a place again!"

"It was Jo Wilkes who did that!" cried Martha, excitedly. "He is the fellow that papa discharged yesterday. I saw him urging the others on. I thought he would knock me down. Look! look! my watch is gone!" Martha held up the broken chain, which hung from a button-hole of her dress. "It had a butterfly on it in diamonds; it was my birthday present."

"It cost ever so much!" Julia broke in.

"He stole it—that Jo Wilkes!" cried Martha.



## CHAPTER VII

"You are sure it was Jo Wilkes who stole it?" asked Carlsen, excitedly. "Then I must leave you. I must find a constable."

"Oh yes, yes; we can get home now!" cried Martha. "Have him arrested! Oh, get the watch, won't you, Carlsen? I can't bear to lose it. And we ought not to have come. I don't know what papa will say. He'll blame me for it all, and make a great fuss. And, oh dear, I'm sure it hasn't been worth it!"

There was a bustle about the entrance as Carlsen went in, and immediately afterwards Ken appeared, half carrying Dave, with Annette, hysterical, in the rear.

"He fainted," explained Ken. "I don't know whether it was the disturbance or seeing Carlsen that caused it. Just stand away. I must get him where it's quiet, and take him home as soon as possible. Oh, there's old Solomon Gross in his wagon; he lives on the marsh road."

Ken shouted to the old fisherman, who willingly consented to take the party into his wagon. Ken would not leave Dave to Annette's care, but sat, carefully supporting him, on the front seat, while old Solomon Gross sat astride a herring-box, and drove, and Annette dangled from the back of the wagon, looking like a thunder-cloud, and muttering strongly



uncomplimentary opinions of circuses and threats against people who interfered with her Dave.

Thanny, appearing suddenly from the tent, in the midst of a crowd of hooting boys, just as the wagon was about to start, dodged his head as if from a missile. "I'm a sight more scairt of her than I be of that lion, or of the manager either," he confided to Robin. "Folks that fires things takes you so unexpected. That manager is tearin' mad. He says he's a-goin' to find out who begun that hissin', and who says that lion is stuffed, and he's a-goin' to have 'em arrested. There's a feller gettin' arrested in there now; ain't he kickin' and fightin', though! There's half a dozen tryin' to hold him till they get an officer. I guess he must have said the zebry was painted."

"Is it Jo Wilkes? Has Carlsen got him?" asked Martha. "Well, then, I suppose we needn't wait. I'm trembling so I can hardly stand. I've always said I didn't care about those horrid workmen, but when they dare to push one, and snatch one's jewelry like that, it is frightful. But I think I shall get it; don't you? Oh, I *don't* know what papa will say!"

"I can't help feeling sorry for Jo Wilkes," said Julia. "He is so young, and I think he has got into bad company. And he has always been so good to his mother and his little crippled sister, and I think that Carlsen is disagreeable, and likes to show his authority."

"I can't quite see that Jo Wilkes has a right to steal my watch because Carlsen is disagreeable," said Martha. "And I think it would look better for you





“THE OLD FISHERMAN WILLINGLY CONSENTED TO TAKE THE PARTY IN HIS WAGON.”







to show a little sympathy for me instead of for the thief. Ju has grown *so* sentimental," she added, in an aside to Robin. "She has been worse since those Rawlins girls were here. Peggy Rawlins was all the time talking about helping poor people."

Thanny had seated himself on a rock beside the road, and taken off his shoes.

"Do they pinch your toes, Thanny?" asked Jean, sympathetically.

"No, my mind," said Thanny. "And this store jacket is jest as bad," he added, as he relieved himself of that also. "A feller that's got anything to 'tend to can't stand it to be dressed up like the minister."

"What have you to attend to, Thanny? You'd better come home with us," said Robin.

"If anybody is goin' to try to make me take back what I said about that lion bein' stuffed, he can jest come on!" said Thanny, rolling up his sleeves. "The fellers wanted me to make a rush with them, and make 'em give back the admission money; but you see I got in on a job, and you can't get a job back if you *are* cheated. But I want 'em to jest try to make me say that that lion ain't stuffed, that's all! I never said he was stuffed with sawdust, anyhow; that was 'Bednego Phillups. If he's got a man inside of him, that's bein' stuffed, ain't it?"

"A man inside him?" repeated Jean.

"Just like Jonah?" demanded Prim, breathlessly.

"They say it's a feller from Goose Creek, but I don't b'lieve that," continued Thanny, shaking his head sagely. "There ain't no such talent up that way; it's an orfle dead-and-alive place. You see, his



arms must be the fore-legs and his legs the hind-legs; and he's got to roar loud, and he's got to roar easy, and he's got to make that tail lash round lively; and I tell you it takes an orfle smart feller! Ned Sears thinks there must be *two* fellers. Anyhow, it's an orfle intellectyal part. The lightnin' calc'lator ain't nowhere compared to it. Oh, I wisht—"

"You would better come home with us, Thanny," interrupted Robin.

"I ain't goin' to run away as if I was afraid of nothin'. And I hain't got my money's—I mean my job's—worth yet," said Thanny, sitting firmly upon his rock.

"I wish we could go home with you," Martha said to Robin, "but I suppose they're making a great fuss about us at home, as it is. Oh, I wish I could get my watch back before papa has to know about it! Do you suppose he will give it up at once? Oh, there's Carlsen! Can you get it?—oh, Carlsen, can you get the watch?"

"He denies having it, of course," said Carlsen, who was apparently in great haste. "The officer hasn't come yet, and there's a great deal of disturbance. I think you may be annoyed if you do not go home at once. If I could leave—"

"We will go at once. Oh, do make him give up the watch!" cried Martha. "I hope they will put him into prison for ten years," she added. "If I don't get that back, papa will never let me have another."

"Then what would become of his mother, whose hands are all drawn up with rheumatism, and his little crippled sister?" demanded Julia.



"Perhaps you think people ought to be allowed to go round stealing watches if their relatives are crippled," said Martha, sarcastically.

"You can't be sure in such a crowd, and I always thought Jo Wilkes had a good face," persisted Julia.

The two sisters fell into a wrangle, which made Robin feel relieved to part from them at the marsh road, and caused Prim serious misgivings concerning the effect of such an example upon Traddles. That young person's mind, however, was so much occupied with the mystery of a man inside the lion, that it might reasonably be hoped that she had not been affected by the quarrelling.

"There never was any disturbance at an entertainment here before," remarked Jean. "I wonder if it was all the fault of those foolish boys who hissed, or of the discharged men from the glass-works? I wish Thanny would have come with us. I'm afraid he'll get hurt. He seems perfectly crazy to be a performer in a show. How silly boys are! You don't suppose he would run away with it if he could get a chance, do you, Robin?"

"No; Thanny is foolish, but not so foolish as that," said Robin, carelessly. She was thinking more of Dave's recognition of Carlsen, and of the delight in Ken's face when he saw it than of Thanny, who, indeed, had a sturdy Yankee faculty of taking care of himself, and was not likely to lose his prudence even in his ambition to be "the man inside of the lion." If Dave's memory should return, it would be no longer a great calamity that the scrap of paper was lost; and, whatever the boys' great scheme might amount to, Ken could no longer be angry with her.



It was weak and selfish for her to think so much of that, she felt, but as long as she could remember it had been the greatest of griefs to have Ken angry with her—Ken, who was often sullen and unreasonable, and sometimes seemed to have much more regard for the rights of Ken Dinsmore than of any one else. It was because poor Ken took things so hard that she felt so, she said to herself, and when he would not allow her to comfort him he had no one.

She had an almost guilty feeling that the circus-going had been a success, in spite of the disturbance, Dave's fainting, and Annette's hysterics, and Martha's distress at the loss of her watch, since Dave had really shown that he remembered. Jean had misgivings as to the effect upon the twins' morals, as well as upon Thanny Baker's, of so much "make-believe" in lions and zebras, and felt that one could scarcely have confidence even in the tall giraffe, whose neck seemed so difficult of imitation; and she said it was a dreadful circus, and she never wanted to go to another. The twins and Traddles were heated and weary, and disappointed at the abrupt termination of the programme, and even Prim's deportment seemed in danger of collapse; but as for Robin, her heart was light.

She was impatient for Ken to come home; he would surely speak to her now that Dave's memory was coming back, so that she had not ruined them, as he had declared. She waited for him on the piazza, but it was almost dark when he came, and he hurried past her into the house without a word.



"Ken! Ken! how is Dave? Can he remember?" called Jean.

"He remembers that man of Mr. Rawlins's. He grows excited and terrified at the sound of his name. But I couldn't make him remember anything else. That girl made such a fuss that I couldn't half try. Whatever a fellow tries to do, there's always a ninny of a girl in the way."

It was evident that Ken was not in as good-humor as might have been expected.

"I don't blame Annette for making a fuss about Dave if she wants to; he's her brother," said Jean, stoutly.

"Oh, of course she has a right to spoil all his chances of getting well if he's her brother. That's the way with sisters. They'll do you all the harm they can, and look as soft and pretty all the while as if they couldn't say boo to a goose."

"Ken, you are cross and horrid; you are so all the time now, and *I* don't know what's the matter with you," said Jean, candidly.

"Those Hallett girls, now; well, perhaps they're not much sillier than other girls, but they never had a brother; lucky for him!" Ken's feelings were evidently deep, although his meaning was slightly obscure. "No, I don't want anything to eat"—this was in answer to a modest suggestion from Robin. "I can't stop. I want to know what is going on down at Quansett. They say there's a great row, and half of those workmen are in the lock-up."

Ken went into the study to see his father; he was seldom in too great a hurry for that; and soon after



they heard him running as fast as he could go down the road to Quansett.

"Ken behaved so queerly," said Jean, meditatively. "He was so cross and excited; but he's cross most of the time lately. I heard him tell you that he was going to do something desperate. But I don't suppose he meant much of anything, do you? Boys seldom do."

Robin was reflecting upon Ken's behavior, and trying to think of some way to improve it, as she sat upon the piazza steps in the dusk, while Jean swung in Ken's hammock, and commented, lazily, upon Ken's unpleasing manners and those of boys in general. Robin had just hit upon the practical effort of making him a new necktie of an uncommonly pretty piece of silk which she had hoarded up, when the quick breathing of a runner and the patter of bare feet told of Thanny's arrival.

"I'd ought to go right home; I don' know what Saul 'll say, but I knew you'd be wantin' to know about that lion. Well, sir, it is Bert Cressy up to Goose Creek that's his hind-legs! The manager he owned right up. After them rough fellers from the works was arrested there wa'n't no more disturbance. The manager said he wa'n't pickin' no fuss with us small fellers, and he knew all along that we was too smart to be took in by that lion! But he thought there was consid'able more sport to him than there was to a real solum-true lion. You see, they had a lion that died, and they skun him and fixed him up so'st a boy could work his hind-legs, and he danced round then, and rode horseback, and 'twas great fun, and he ain't a mite stuck up, Bert Cressy ain't, and



I had an introduction to him! I wanted to stay this evening. I could have got a ticket, but Saul's so orfle partickler. The folks from the hotels are goin' to-night. I saw Ken, and I asked him if he was goin', and he kind of snapped me up; he said he had something besides circuses to think of. I expect it's that French boy. Ken hain't never seemed as if he really was Ken sence—"

"Did you hear whether Martha Hallett's watch was recovered, Thanny?" interrupted Jean.

"The feller that stole it was took up; that's all I know," said Thanny. "Say, 'Bednego Phillups and me are goin' to save up and get a lion's skin, and have a show of our own. And I'm goin' to send you compliment'ries, and the twins and Traddles and Moira."

Suitable acknowledgments were made of this generous offer, and Thanny went proudly and hopefully homeward.

"I guess I'll send the minister a compliment'ry, too," he said to himself, as his bare feet slid deliciously through the warm sand of the bluff. "They'll all come, 'thout it's Ken. I wisht I knew what was the matter with Ken to-night."

Robin's thoughts reverted to the necktie as soon as Thanny had gone. Ken had a slight weakness in the matter of neckties, and he liked a brown and white stripe, like the piece of silk she had saved. She went up-stairs and found it, carefully folded away in her bureau drawer, and then she went into Ken's room to find a necktie for a pattern. He was very particular, and the length and the width must be exactly right.



Ken tossed his things about so that his favorite necktie was hard to find. And one must be careful, for he disliked to have his possessions disturbed. What queer things a boy would put into his bureau drawer!—a patent folding fish-line, a fox's brush—there were still foxes in the Deepmouth woods—a collection of unfinished photographs—Ken had had a great zeal for photography, but he had tired of that now—dried sunfish and specimens of felspar, the rules and regulations of the Quansett Boat Club—a boys' club of which Ken was president and D'ri Prettygo, the shoemaker's son, vice-president—knives in various stages of disability, a walrus's tooth, and a paper of herrings which sometimes served for a late supper or a fishing breakfast at three o'clock in the morning. There were neckties tossed about among these precious possessions—the dainty little box which Robin had given him to keep them in was empty on the dressing-table—and Robin selected one for a model; but one end caught upon something carefully tucked away in a back corner of the drawer, and she pulled that forward also—a tiny watch, with the monogram M. H. upon one side, and a butterfly in diamonds upon the other side! A piece of coarse brown paper was wrapped about it, but the broken chain hanging out had caught in the satin of the necktie.

Martha Hallett's watch! Ken must have picked it up. It wasn't that poor Jo Wilkes, after all, thought Robin. But why—why had he not returned it at once? Why had he hidden it away here? Robin's heart stood still with a sudden terrible fear. But the next moment she laughed it away, ashamed



that she should have felt it. Ken's desperate deeds could never mean anything like that. How glad Martha Hallett would be to have it again, and how delightful it was that Jo Wilkes would be cleared at once! Probably Ken had not heard that Jo Wilkes had been arrested, absorbed as he was in his anxiety about Dave, and his delight at what seemed like a return of his memory. She could hardly wait for his return. When he had heard about Jo Wilkes, of course he would go over to Sandford at once; perhaps he had gone before this time, feeling that he could not delay long enough to come home for the watch. It would be like Ken to feel strongly for a person who was unjustly accused.

She would put it back just where she had found it. Ken never liked to have people meddle with his possessions, and she would find out when he came home how it had all happened. He couldn't be so cross but that he would tell her that.

But she forgot all about the necktie. As she was going down-stairs, that dreadful fear seized her again. It was absurd, but it would come. She stood still on the landing, listening to Jean, who was repeating to sleepless, over-excited Traddles the soothing, monotonous story of the boy and the kid. "Water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't whip kid, kid won't go along. Only look at the moon rise! It's almost sunrise! Time I was at home an hour and a half ago." How pleasant and cheerful were all the home ways and sounds. Her father was right; there was no trouble, none whatever, except wrongdoing. But Robin could never like to hear the foolish, sleepy little tale again; it always brought back



that moment on the stairs, when that fear had seized her like a giant's grasp.

She sat on the piazza steps and waited for Ken. She had to wait a long time. Ken was not like the kid-boy, who finally got home an hour and a half too soon. Traddles had long ago succumbed to the drowsy influences of the story. Lights and voices had gradually died away, until all the house was still. Only a half-awakened bird and the softly-slipping waves on the shore kept Robin company. There was Ken at last, coming up the terrace steps with two leaps, as he always did. There was a vague comfort in that; it seemed as if a boy with guilty deeds upon his mind would go guiltily, not with a hop, skip, and jump like that.

She tried to speak, but the words would not come.

"Well, if it isn't you!" exclaimed Ken, starting at sight of the small, dark figure. "I should like to know what you are doing out here by yourself in the dark?"

"I—I—it was pleasant, and I thought I wouldn't go in until you came," stammered Robin.

"It seems to me that you have taken a great notion of spying upon me lately. Perhaps you want to tell the governor that I wasn't at home until ten o'clock. If you haven't done me mischief enough—"

"You shouldn't say such things to me, Ken, when you know I never meant to do you any mischief, and you know perfectly well that I never spy upon you," said Robin, with as much spirit as she could summon. "I—I only wanted to ask you about those workmen who were arrested. What have they done with them?"

"Done with them? They're in the lock-up over



at Sandford. They've been treated badly enough, but it was of no use for them to go to that circus and make a disturbance. I'm a friend of labor, but the laborers have got to behave decently, you know," said Ken, sagely.

"But the one who was accused of stealing Martha Hallett's watch?" stammered Robin.

"Oh!" Ken started and frowned sharply. Robin saw his face in a straggling moonray. "They will accuse those fellows of anything! Why did you ask me that?" He turned suddenly upon her with an angry air.

"I wanted to know. Martha was anxious about her watch. And—and" — Robin's voice gathered firmness—"I thought it would be such a dreadful thing if he were unjustly accused."

"Why should you think he was unjustly accused? She lost her watch; it was snatched, wasn't it? She *said* she saw him do it."

"But I thought there might be—might be some mistake."

"Be careful that *you* don't make any mistakes!" said Ken, with a harsh laugh, as he went by her into the hall. "I'll tell you one thing, Robin Dinsmore, you've had your last chance of spying upon me! There's no joke and no make-believe about it *this time*! I'm going away to-morrow. I'm not going to *run* away; my father will know all about it in the morning. Then you'll have a chance to think what you've brought your only brother to!"

"Oh, Ken, Ken!" cried Robin, her voice broken by sobs.

But Ken had gone up-stairs, and she heard the door of his room close behind him.



## CHAPTER VIII

ROBIN rose early next morning. How could one sleep when Ken was going away, and when such doubts and fears about Ken lay heavy on one's heart? Although he had cried "Wolf!" so many times, Robin did not doubt that he was really going now. It was not only that he had announced his intention in a different manner from his usual one, but there was the mystery about the watch. If he had—had done anything strange about it (Robin refused to put the dreadful matter plainly even to her own mind), that would be a reason for his going.

Only Moira was astir in the house—Moira and Adam, the monkey, whom the old woman had found to be "foine company," and with whom she kept up an animated dialogue, she dropping into her ancient Irish tongue, and he chattering his queer monkey falsetto, which had a plaintive tone. Adam behaved better with Moira than with any one else, perhaps because she had imbibed a great respect for his intelligence, and invariably addressed him as "Sorr." The sun had only just risen over the Sandford woods, and the earliest bird matins were not yet over, but looking out of her window Robin espied a boy on a pony, riding up and down before the house, apparently waiting for some one. A nearer view showed her that it was Duke Rawlins.



He took off his cap with a boyish blush when he saw her, and Robin ran down-stairs. He was probably waiting to see Ken, but she hesitated to call him, he would be so cross. He seemed to have guessed last night that she had discovered his possession of the watch, and to be more angry with her than ever. Moreover she did not know whether he would care to see Duke Rawlins; it seemed to her that the two boys would now have very little in common in spite of their agreement about the rights of labor.

"Does Ken really stick to it, and will his father allow him to go?" Duke asked, eagerly, as she ran down the terrace steps.

"I don't know; he only told me that he was going away," answered Robin, flushing with mortification that Ken should confide in her so little.

"He seemed wild to go as soon as I told him of the opportunity. He said things had gone awfully wrong with him. I don't know what things they were." Duke said this inquiringly, watching Robin's face. "If I could have helped him—but he didn't tell me, and I don't suppose I could. I've found out that a fellow has to help himself; that's the only help in this world that amounts to anything in the long-run. But he said he must go away; he was desperate enough to go as sailor on board a yacht, if he could get a chance. Of course I knew his father would never consent to that, and I tried to convince him that he'd be awfully sick of it. He told me that he wanted to study chemistry; that was all the book-learning that he ever cared for, and he had a special reason for wanting to learn that. I happened to remember that my tutor's brother was a manufacturing



chemist in Boston, and that I'd heard my tutor say the day we were in Boston on our way down here that his brother wanted him to find him a boy 'with something in him.' Mr. Eames said the boy would be expected to do everything, he thought—errands, and perhaps even drudgery; but Ken didn't flinch. I thought it would be hard for him if his father wouldn't let him go. Fathers don't always understand, you know; mine doesn't, anyway. I don't mean that a fellow always knows what is best for him, of course; but it does seem as if work would be good for Ken, he seems so restless, and as if he had a lot on his mind." Duke again looked inquiringly at Robin.

"He has been disappointed about something," she said. "I—I wish boys wouldn't think they can do such great things. I wish he would be contented to go to school and study, as papa wants him to."

"When a fellow doesn't take naturally to books he generally has to find out for himself the great value of them before he'll study. Sometimes then he can't get a chance. I didn't get that from my tutor; I found it out for myself," he added, half laughingly.

"I think you're very wise—for a boy," said Robin, candidly. "I wish Ken were half as wise."

"I shouldn't want him to go to the same school," said Duke, looking ruefully at his shortened leg. "But I don't mean to howl. There was an old fellow, you know, who, 'when his legs were smitten off, he fought upon his stumps.' I mean to be like that. Here's a nice bit, too, that reminded me of the old fellow." Duke drew a well-worn note-book from



his pocket. "I am a man of no strength at all of body, nor yet of mind, but I would, if I could, though I can but crawl, spend my life in the pilgrim's way. Other brunts I also look for, but this I have resolved on, to wit, to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go. As to the main, I thank Him that loves me.' But that is too—too sacred." He stopped suddenly and replaced the book. "I say, you don't think I'm preachy, do you? A bit like that helps me. And I can talk to you, some way; you seem like Peggy." He had dismounted and thrown himself on the grass beside Robin.

"Oh, I'm not like her! I'm not a bit saintly," said Robin.

"Peggy a saint! Well, I should like her to hear that," he said, with a gay laugh. "She wants to work and to help people, that's all. She likes to, you know. We have come on ahead, she and I, with the servants, to see to setting things to rights. I wanted to know, too, about the trouble in the works. My father won't allow me to meddle, as he calls it. He says that when I am twenty-five I shall have everything my own way. I am going to try to get strong enough to be a business man for that, to show them that there needn't be any contest between capital and labor. They laugh at me because I'm only a boy, but if they'd only give me a chance I'd show them!" Duke's thin high-keyed voice grew shrill with excitement, and his pale cheeks flushed.

"Those men who were arrested—do you know—" Robin wanted to ask about Jo Wilkes, but she could not find voice.

Duke knitted his brows painfully. "Of course



they were sure to be in the mood for mischief, turned away like that. Carlsen is determined not to have any men who belong to the union. I wish my father would not trust that man so. I don't mean that he is dishonest, but he's an old grinder; that's what I heard one of the men say, and I know it's true. I hoped Mr. Hallett would see that his ways were not right, but he seems to think he has been too easy, and goes about chuckling over Carlsen's ability to make them gee. If I ever do have anything to say about the business—" Duke's girlishly blue eyes kindled. "But it's a great while to wait," he added, with a long sigh. "But Peggy and I are going to look after the families of those poor fellows. My father never objects to that. If he hadn't allowed us to do that the men wouldn't have come back in the last strike. And Carlsen took all the credit to himself. How do Dave Freneau and his sister get along? Ken was coming from their house when I met him yesterday, but he wouldn't say much about Dave. I thought he didn't seem very hopeful. He said he thought his memory was returning, but the girl spoiled everything. He said she was a regular screech-owl."

"Poor Annette! she's very excitable, and Ken hasn't much patience with girls; he doesn't like them so very well," said Robin, with a great sigh.

"That's queer, when he has sisters—sisters are such a comfort to a fellow," said Duke, with feeling.

"Oh, I—I'm not! I was careless and—and mean, and did him a lot of harm," faltered Robin; and then she stopped suddenly; there was so much that she could not tell, that it was better to tell nothing. "Ken has had a great deal to vex him since—since



Dave Freneau got hurt," she resumed, controlling her voice by a great effort.

Ken was coming down the walk; he looked surprised, and scowled a little at Robin as she ran away.

"Do make him stay to breakfast," she said, with an effort at being quite at her ease. But Ken only scowled the more.

Duke went away, and Ken walked the hall restlessly until the time when his father could see him. They were together for a long time in the study, and Ken came out to the breakfast-table with his face brightened considerably.

"He is willing to let me go," he said, somewhat gruffly, as if he didn't wish to speak to her, Robin thought, but was impelled by his longing for sympathy. "He sees that it's the best thing. He thinks I shall want to come back by the time school begins, but I sha'n't. I shall never want to come back to this poky little hole, where there's no chance for a fellow, and everything goes against him." Ken stood by the table and swallowed a hasty cup of coffee. He couldn't eat; he had too much to do and to think of, he said; which was a very unusual condition for Ken. "I've got to go to-day, you know, for fear some other fellow will get the chance. I must take the afternoon train up, and it gets to Sandford about two o'clock. You'll have to fly round to see to my things. I've got to get a letter that Mr. Eames is going to give me, and I've got something else to attend to over there, too."

Robin's heart leaped. "Something else" might be to return the watch! She could not resist giving



him a glance of wistful inquiry, which, however, he was too deeply absorbed to observe.

"I'm going to see some of my friends," he said, after a moment's hesitation. "Poor Dave!—I feel the worst about leaving him. Of course, there are my father and mother, and all of you"—this amendment was drawn forth by a faint exclamation of reproach from Robin—"but sometimes a boy's own people don't understand him very well; they think he is selfish and good for nothing, when he only just isn't in his right place. It's very well for Duke Rawlins to say that any place can be made the right one if a boy is plucky. *He* doesn't know everything. He's a good fellow—an awfully good little fellow, though."

"I think he is the very nicest boy I ever knew," said Robin, warmly; "and he thinks so much of his sisters!"

"I suppose they don't bother him, and spoil everything he undertakes, and spy round, think everything bad of him, and keep nagging at him about Greek and mathematics and such rubbish. I think my father is finding out that every boy wasn't born to dig away at books—the dear old dad!" Ken's eyes filled with tears. They were the first that Robin had seen there since Wolf, his fine old hound, died, the first year they were at Penauhant. "I didn't know how bad things were," Ken went on, with a little quaver in his voice. "I suppose you do, and I—I ought to; but I thought I was going to make us millionaires. We should have been, Robin, but for that accident to Dave. Even if you had taken care of that paper— But it's of



no use to talk about it, and it makes a fellow half wild."

"I'm afraid I shall have to sell the cranberry meadow," said Robin.

"You can't get what it's worth. Keep it if you can—there's going to be such a crop. Didn't father say so?"

"If we can get along," said Robin. "He doesn't know."

"I shall send money home. Just let me have a chance, and you'll see whether I'm good for nothing."

"Ken, did—did father give you money for your expenses?" asked Robin, haltingly.

"He couldn't. Think of it! I told him I had a way to get the money, and he seemed so relieved. It isn't a nice way; a fellow has to do desperate deeds sometimes." Ken's tone was bitter and reckless. "You know I told you I was going to, and I have. Any way is better than to worry the poor old governor about it."

"Oh, not *any* way, Ken!" cried Robin. "Not a way that would—that would hurt others."

"Others!" echoed Ken, bitterly. "I've begun to think it's about time that I looked out for myself a little. You would sacrifice me and every one else to that silly pride of yours, anyway. You needn't be afraid; what I've done won't be known to the public." Ken laughed harshly. "There, I don't want to talk about it. Some things are more than a fellow can stand. What should I have said when I was standing up for that poor little lame fellow up at St. Luke's to know that I should come to this? But he's a good fellow; his sisters have a better brother



than you have. But if I have disgraced you, just remember who brought me to it."

"Ken, Ken!" cried Robin, "you won't do anything that would *kill* papa."

"Kill papa? How is it going to kill him when he won't know it unless you tell him? Perhaps you'll think it your duty to tell him."

"Oh, I don't know what is my duty!" said Robin, despairingly.

"Well, I'll tell you—it's to go and get my trunk ready. I'm going now to get Solomon Gross to carry it over to Sandford. I can ride over with him, and I wish you'd hurry, for I want to be off."

Robin sat motionless, her face buried in her hands.

"I believe you want to drive me crazy!" exclaimed Ken. "I should like to know if it isn't hard enough for me to have to do such a miserable thing, and be ashamed to look anybody in the face? Of course I shall pay it as soon as I can. Do you suppose I shall ever have any peace until it is paid? But there! I won't talk to you; you're the very worst sister a boy ever had!" And Ken shut the door energetically behind him.

"Pay it—pay it; but what is to become of poor Jo Wilkes?" Robin murmured to herself. She wished that she had courage to say it to Ken himself. Ken, her own brother, was capable of such a thing as that! She had always felt a lack of straightforwardness in Ken. He was more conscious of his own rights than of those of other people; he never seemed to feel how ignoble it was to shirk; but that he was capable of a theft, a base, common theft—that was like a nightmare; it could not be true!





“‘YOU’RE THE VERY WORST SISTER A BOY EVER HAD.’”







It was a relief to occupy herself with the packing; she would force everything else out of her mind, she said to herself. He could not have meant that, anyway; he could not have owned to such a deed as that! And yet that was Martha Hallett's watch in his drawer. Perhaps Jo Wilkes had snatched it, and then dropped it; but it was much more probable that Martha had dropped it, the chain having broken by accident in the crowd. The Hallett girls were proverbially inexact; they were always being perfectly sure of things, and not seeming to feel it to be of the least consequence when they were proven to be entirely wrong. Ken had undoubtedly picked the watch up, but he had not returned it. He meant to pay for it when he had earned money enough. He seemed to think that would atone, and he cared nothing for the wrong and disgrace to poor Jo Wilkes.

"It's the queerest thing I ever heard of for Ken to go off like this," Jean was saying, as she helped. "Why is he in such a hurry? He almost knocked me down on the steps. Oh, why wasn't I a boy? Mamma is crying. She says the best always goes first, and she is afraid that no one has thought of making him comfortable since she hasn't been able to. As if she ever—"

"Hush, Jean! you mustn't say it. Poor little mamma! we'll *never* say it, Jean."

"But it isn't the best who is going, all the same," said Jean, sturdily. "He is cross all the time, lately. All he says to me is 'get out of the way!' He reminds me of Annette Freneau. Ken used to be quite nice. I thought he would be so pleased at going



away that it would make him good-natured, but he is only wild to be gone. One would think he was running away from something."

"Jean, *don't* say such things!" cried Robin, sharply. She had been aroused suddenly from her reflections at Jean's last words, and they seemed the confirmation of her worst fears.

"I should like to know what I *can* say!" said Jean, crossly. "I didn't mean that I supposed he was running away from anything but too many girls, and Latin lessons, and being poor. I didn't mean that I thought he had done anything dreadful. You're tumbling those things awfully, Robin. It isn't a bit like you. You're in as much of a hurry as he is. Oh, of course, if Ken wants to go right away—you always would do anything for Ken. I suppose we shall go over to see him off, you and I; mamma said we must, though I can't say I think he will care much about it."

"Of course we must go," said Robin, and wondered that she had not thought of it. She had, in truth, been only in a hurry to get him off.

The trunk was ready long before Solomon Gross came for it. Ken came with the old man, and took a hasty leave of his father and mother. He was in a greater hurry than ever, and Robin could not be sure whether the tears upon his cheeks were his mother's or his own.

"You say good-bye to the youngsters, Robin, and let Posy be a little sticky if she wants to, for my sake. You and Jean are coming over to the station?" Ken frowned slightly. "Well, I suppose you will enjoy seeing the last of a fellow," he continued, jestingly.



They were his own tears, Robin knew by the savage way in which he wiped them off. "I shouldn't blame you if you were glad to get rid of me. I—I haven't been much of a fellow, and I can't purr when I'm stroked the wrong way, any more than Banquo. That's the way with girls; boys never can."

"I don't know why boys shouldn't have to put up with things just as much as girls," said Jean, stoutly. "Anyway, you'll find out when you're away from home, and haven't any one to darn your stockings or make lemon jelly for you."

"Good-bye, Jean; you can have all my old neckties to dress your dolls."

"Dolls, indeed!" cried Jean, indignantly. Jean professed to be quite beyond dolls; but Ken had discovered secrets in the unfinished attic on a rainy day. And so Ken went, his long legs dangling from the back of Solomon Gross's wagon, there being only room for his trunk in front with the driver, joking gayly, but with signs of trouble plainly visible on his boyish face.

"I won't believe that he has done anything bad; I can't believe it," said Robin to herself, as she stood watching, with her eyes shaded from the sunlight, until Solomon Gross's wagon had turned out of sight down the marsh road. "But I shall know soon. I can find out from Martha Hallett whether he has returned the watch."

One might say that one would not and could not believe, but still the torturing doubt remained, and Robin both longed for and dreaded the time when she should learn the truth from Martha Hallett. There were many friends assembled at the station to



see Ken off; he was a favorite among the Sandford High-school boys, and a crowd of them was there. People had come over from the Quansett Hotel also, and Cap'n Saul and Thanny were in their "store clothes," regardless of the claims of "stiddy day's works." Cap'n Saul sought to console Robin by prophesying that Ken would "make a man of himself," but Thanny took a despondent view of the matter; he said it all came of Ken's "goin' with them Frenchies," and it was evident that he held Annette Freneau directly responsible. Peggy and Kitty Rawlins were there, with Duke, full of sympathy and cheerful prophecies, and the Hallett girls loudly lamenting that Ken should go away before their tennis party, and trying to persuade him to promise "solemnly" to return for their midsummer picnic. Ken was more annoyed than cheered by all this attention, Robin thought, although he was usually such a "good fellow" among his friends; but then Ken never did like the Hallett girls. He was still evidently in a hurry to be off. His face wore a look of relief at Robin's last glimpse of it in the car window, as, amid a great shouting and waving of handkerchiefs, the heavily panting engine rushed away with him.

"You and Jean are coming home with us, aren't you?" said Martha Rawlins.

"Oh, you must! Peggy and Kitty will come too, and we'll cheer you up," said Julia.

Jean was pinching her arm furtively; Jean, of course, wanted to go.

Could she have the heart to go? thought Robin. It all depended upon what Martha Hallett should tell her. How light her heart would be if—if—



"Tell me, first, about those workmen who made the disturbance—about the man who was arrested."

"Oh yes; did you get your watch?" asked Jean—happy Jean—who knew no reason for beating about the bush.



## CHAPTER IX.

"OH, don't say anything to me about that watch! I've had *such* a time!" cried Martha, growing very red in the face. "I never saw papa so angry. He said he was having trouble enough with the men without being obliged to have one arrested for stealing. He talked in that way, instead of sympathizing with me about my watch. As if I were to blame! When we were little girls we used to go about alone anywhere that we liked. After we began to go to New York in the winter, mamma found that was common, so we had to have a maid, and now we can't stir without Miss Ferris at our heels."

"Papa doesn't care about the commonness, you know," explained Julia, "but he is afraid the workmen will be rude to us."

"They were, sure enough, yesterday, at the circus, the horrid things!" said Martha. "I hope they'll have to stay in jail long enough to pay for it. I *never* had such a fright."

"Did you get your watch?" persisted Jean, who had found it needful to add to her daily devotions a prayer that she might not envy Martha Hallett that watch.

"*Get it!* Why, of course one doesn't expect to get it," said Martha, impatiently. "I shall be satisfied if I'm not scolded any more about it, and if papa



doesn't fulfil his threat to send me to the State Normal School. Only think of it! that dreadful place where they manufacture teachers, and you *have* to study. He means it, too; that's the worst of papa, he always means things. He says it would make a woman of me—as if I wanted to be made a woman of!" added Martha, in an aggrieved tone.

"Oh, I wish I could go—somewhere—to learn to do something to earn money!" Robin burst forth in spite of herself. "Oh, I don't know what I'm saying; of course I couldn't go," she added, hastily.

"Robin, what *is* the matter?" cried Jean. "You're pale, and you look so—so frightened!"

"It's nothing, only—only there seems to be so much trouble," faltered Robin. "And of course I should like to be something some day besides the mate of the *Mary Ann*." Robin tried to speak lightly, there was so much surprise and concern in the faces around her.

Martha, who had looked at her curiously, drew a long breath. "I call that fun," she said. "I couldn't be mate of so much as a row-boat without having Miss Ferris perched up in the bow, like 'the sweet little cherub that sits up aloft.'"

"You really ought not to talk like that, Martha," said Julia, reprovably. "She always tries to be kind, and I'm sure she dislikes to tag us round as much as we dislike to have her."

"Did they search him?" asked Jean, whose mind was not to be diverted from the watch. "Why, how you jumped, Robin! What startled you?"

"It's no wonder she did; you will keep talking



about that horrid man!" said Martha, crossly. "I wish people would let me forget all about it."

"I don't see how you can forget that lovely watch," said Jean.

"I can't help thinking of Jo Wilkes's mother and that pitiful-looking little crippled sister," said Julia.

"They'll be taken care of; he belongs to the union, and the men look out for each other," said Martha. "And he isn't any worse off than the others; they'll all be fined or imprisoned for making a disturbance."

"But stealing is different, Martha; of course he'll have a long sentence, and then there's the disgrace; it will break his mother's heart," persisted Julia. "Mrs. Farnwell was talking to me about it this morning; she pities Jo's mother so; she says that she came of as respectable a family as any on the Cape; her father was a Fleetwell sea-captain."

"Why doesn't she go back there, then?" said Martha, quickly. "Probably she has friends who would take care of her. Or perhaps Jo will get clear; who knows? I don't see how they can prove anything."

"You said you *knew* it was he, Martha, and they'll make you go to court and swear," said Julia. "Oh dear, you don't suppose they'll make us all go, do you? I'm sure I don't know anything about it; do you, Robin?"

They were going along the broad street now, in the cheerful afternoon sunshine. Robin had accompanied the Hallet girls, scarcely realizing where she was going, absorbed in her eagerness to unravel the mystery of the watch. It was frightfully clear now. Ken had done "a desperate deed," as he had threatened. The opportunity had come to him, and he had not



hesitated to take it. He could do without his father's money, because that watch would pay the expenses of his start in life. He "should pay it back as soon as he could; he should never have any peace until he could pay it;" and that seemed to him to make it right.

What should she do? Oh, what *could* she do? thought Robin, with her brain in a whirl, while the girls chattered on, and Julia confided to her that she knew just how she felt, because she was almost broken-hearted when Martha went away for a little while, although they quarrelled so often, and Martha was generally "horrid." She must clear Jo Wilkes from the unjust suspicion; she must pay for the watch. It would be long before Ken, with the wages of a boy and his careless ways, would be able to pay for it; but how could she expose Ken's guilt, and bring upon her father the disgrace and distress of mind which would be more than he could bear?

"*Go to court?*" repeated Martha, slowly. "I sha'n't have to go to court, shall I?" She had been silent, evidently revolving this idea in her mind, while Julia and Jean chattered, and Robin was being tortured with her doubts and dreads. "I *wouldn't* go, anyway; they couldn't make me."

"You would go if papa threatened to send you to the Normal School," said Julia. "That's Martha's standing dread. Papa never threatens to send me. I suppose because I'm not so bright as Martha; he knows it wouldn't be of any use."

"I wish I had been bright enough to stay away from that horrid old circus that wasn't any fun, anyway," said Martha, dolefully. "There seems to be



no end to the fuss about it. I wish they would just let Jo Wilkes go, and not say any more about it. I should think they might if I'm willing. It was my watch."

"If he is really a thief I suppose that wouldn't do, would it?" said Julia, doubtfully.

"He would have to bear the disgrace just the same; no one would ever trust him," said Robin, reflectively.

"If people steal you can't wish them to get off altogether; they might do it again, you know," said Jean, sagely.

"He'll have to go away from here, anyway," said Martha. "None of those men who were discharged will be taken back again. I heard papa say that they were determined upon that. He said it was time that the manufacturers had the control of things. No workmen are so high and mighty as the glass-men, you know. The union dictates how long the apprentices shall serve—just think of it! That's so that they can keep their skill and their secrets all to themselves, and demand what wages they choose. All that is going to be changed, papa says; and although all those men who were discharged were apprentices in the fourth grade, it is of no use for them to stay round here; not one will be hired again. And they will hire foreigners if they like. The union tries to keep them out, you know; that is one reason why they dislike Carlsen so—he is a foreigner. I wonder if he wouldn't help me to get Jo Wilkes released? I *can't* go to court—I should die! but it would be just like papa to make me."

"I wish—I wish he could get free," said Robin, with a kind of suppressed eagerness.



Perhaps the disgrace would not matter to him if he were going away; at all events, it would not kill him, as it would her father; and the watch could be paid for, perhaps, without any exposure of Ken's wickedness. It would be sacrificing Jo Wilkes unjustly; Robin was not for an instant blind to that fact; but what could one do when things were so hard, so unendurable? Could she be expected to accuse her brother—she, the only one who knew—and have him arrested as a thief, brought into court to stand his trial instead of Jo Wilkes? He had not snatched it, of course; he had only picked it up and kept it; but that could not be very different in the eye of the law, as it was not in reality.

"I wish he could get free and go away," she repeated, all the eagerness appearing now in her face and voice.

"Why do *you* wish so?" said Martha, turning upon her suddenly.

It was well that Julia answered for her, for Robin could scarcely find her voice, in her sudden fear lest she were betraying Ken in her anxiety to shield him.

"How can she help wishing so, thinking of his mother and sister?" said Julia. "I suppose one ought to wish a thief to get his deserts; but Jo Wilkes has such an honest face, it is hard to believe him a real thief. I think those other fellows must have urged him on. Carlsen has made them so bitter they are ready for anything. I wish he never had come here, if papa does think he is going to do great things for the works."

"I wish I had gone down to the works and found Carlsen, and asked him to get Jo Wilkes off," said



Martha, anxiously. "I can't get that court out of my mind. Fancy my having to get upon a stand, and hold up my right hand, and swear to things! Those lawyers confuse one so, too! I went once with papa, so I know all about it; and I know I couldn't endure it."

"Would it be as bad as the normal school?" said Jean, jestingly.

"Oh, girls, it isn't a joking matter!" exclaimed Martha, piteously. "Will you come with me and find Carlsen? You will, Robin, I am sure."

"I must say you're not very polite, Martha, when we're almost home, and the Rawlins girls and Duke promised to come to tea," remonstrated Julia.

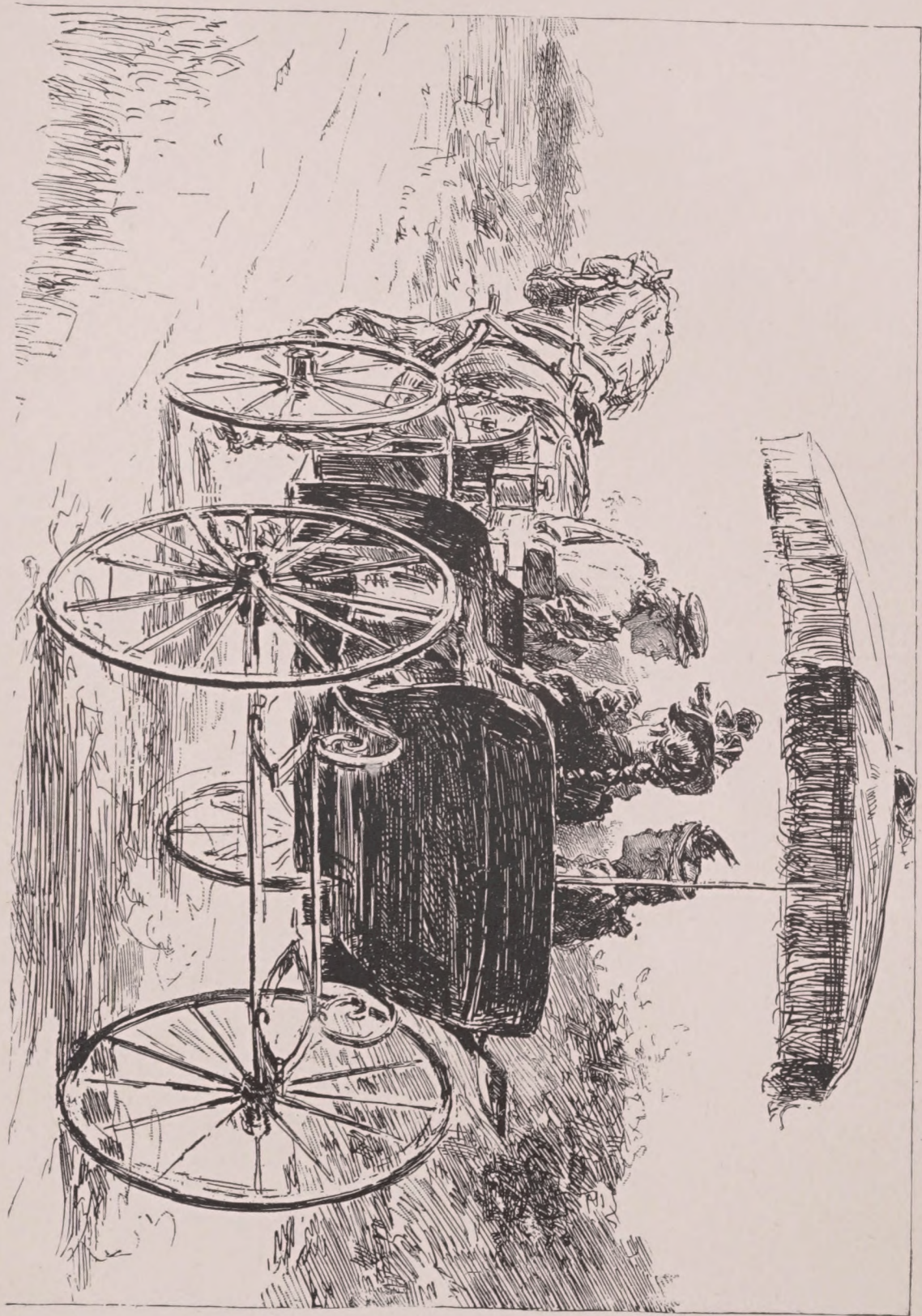
"We can be at home before tea-time," said Martha, "and we can have out the pony. It is too warm for tennis, and driving will be much nicer. There is only room for four in the phaeton, so Miss Ferris can't tag. Wouldn't you like to go, girls?"

Robin had to try not to show too great eagerness, and Jean was quite ready for a drive behind the fat, long-tailed pony, which was her especial admiration.

"We ought to have Peggy and Duke with us," suggested Julia, as they drove along, Martha keeping the fat pony up to his liveliest pace. "They must have some influence over Carlsen, though I'm not sure that they would think Jo Wilkes ought to be let off if he is a thief."

"It isn't a question of letting Jo Wilkes off, but of letting me off from that dreadful court," said Martha. "Carlsen likes to keep on the right side of us," she added, shrewdly. "Papa is the senior part-





“MARTHA KEPT THE FAT PONY UP TO HIS LIVELIEST PACE.”







ner, after all, and he has the more money, although the Rawlinses are so—so swell."

"Now, I should like to know if you are not talking about money and being vulgar?" exclaimed Julia, who was not too good-natured to take her revenge when an opportunity offered.

"Money is worth talking about if it will save one from going to court," said Martha. "Oh, how I wish I had never said a word about the watch!"

"Papa would have had to know some time; he would find out that you had lost it," said Julia.

"And perhaps you'll get it again," suggested Jean.

"He could have passed it on to some one else. Those men are all in league with each other," said Martha.

"I don't think I should mind going to court so very much," said Jean, reflectively. "It's only to tell the plain truth. And though, of course, one would pity his mother and little sister, I don't see why one should feel so badly for the thief. He needn't snatch watches," she added, stoutly.

"I wonder if he wouldn't confess and restore the watch, if some one were to talk to him? I might ask Peggy Rawlins to go to see him with me," said Julia.

"Oh, dear me! will you let me get Jo Wilkes off, if I can, without such a fuss?" cried Martha, impatiently. "After that you can go missionarying, and be just like Peggy Rawlins, if you want to."

"I'm not good, like her," said Julia, regretfully. "I wonder if she would have been so good if she had been freckled, and roly-poly, and her nose almost a pug?"



"*Almost* a pug!" echoed Martha, with a shrill, provoking little laugh—"almost!"

Perhaps it was fortunate that they had reached the glass-works, for Julia was apt to resent deeply any uncomplimentary suggestions upon her appearance. She alighted, grumblingly, at her sister's request, and went into the counting-room. Their father was never there at this hour, but Martha declared that she was afraid to face his alpaca coat, which hung upon a nail there, while he was so angry with her. "He is never so angry with Ju," she explained. "He thinks she went to the circus because I enticed her, and she the older, too! It's really ridiculous."

"Carlsen isn't here," said Julia, reappearing, after a few minutes. "They say he drove away in his buggy; and one man thinks he saw him turn down the marsh road."

"Perhaps we shall meet him," said Martha, after knitting her brows for a moment. "At all events, we may as well drive there as anywhere; it's a pleasant road."

Robin strained her eyes even more eagerly than Martha to catch a glimpse of Carlsen, but it was all in vain.

"He probably went over to Quansett; the man said he had been gone quite a while; and he may have taken the short-cut home, along the edge of the Honey-pot," suggested Julia. "The road is bad, but he is always in a hurry. Papa says he is bound to be rich; he won't let anything stand in his way."

"I wish we could find him. I sha'n't sleep a wink to-night for thinking of that witness stand," said Martha.



"Here we are at the Freneau house," said Julia. "And there's Annette in the door. What is the matter, I wonder? She is crying and wringing her hands."

"Oh, that little tempest! I dare say she does it in her sleep," said Martha, impatiently, and was driving on.

Robin begged her to stop. "It must be something serious to make her behave like that," she said.

In fact, Annette was the embodiment of frantic distress and wrath. She sobbed and screamed, she wrung her hands, and twisted her apron as if she were wreaking vengeance upon an enemy.

"Oh, have you meet him—that bad man that carry away my Dave?" she cried, as Robin alighted and went towards her.

"Dave carried away?" exclaimed Robin.

"Yes, it is that wicked man! He have throw dust in my Dave's eyes. He have talk and talk to him about glass; he have try to find out what Dave know, what my father have told him. But he have found out nothing! For once I have been glad that he know nothing, my poor Dave!"

"What *is* she talking about?" asked Martha.

"I think she means Carlsen," said Robin, thrilled with a new anxiety. Could he have made Dave remember, when Ken could not?

"Carlsen! oh, where is he? Which way did he go?" exclaimed Martha, who was not to be moved from her own purpose by all Annette's tears.

"He have carried off my Dave!" repeated Annette. "He would not listen to me; I have followed and hung on the wagon, and he have laugh at me."



"Did he carry him off against his will?" asked Robin.

"What is it that is Dave's will? He poor foolish boy now. The bad man throw dust in his eyes. He tell him of the fine things they make at the works now; he want to show him, he say; as if we have not seen flint-glass where we come from, Dave and me, and make it, too! Dave know how to do the whole if they would let him. Our father, he was master melter!" Annette said this with an indescribable air of pride; for a moment she had forgotten her trouble.

"It seems he has taken the boy over to the works to show him the new department. I'm sure it was very kind of him, and I don't see what she is making such a fuss about," said Julia.

"He probably took the short-cut. If we go back at once we shall find him at the works," said Martha. "*Please* hurry, Robin!"

"He won't hurt Dave, Annette. He will bring him back again," said Robin, assuringly. "We are going over to the works; we will tell him that he must carry Dave home at once."

"*You* bring him home! I will trust my Dave with you," said Annette. "Get him away from that bad man! He have the evil eye! He will make my Dave remember what is great secret, what no one know but him, and then he will find it out! He will cheat us, just as he try to cheat my poor father. It is not for nothing that your brother Ken have tell me to look out! But how can I look out when, though I make great noise, no one will hear me?"

"Goodness! they can't help hearing you!" said



Martha, impatiently. She started up the pony while Robin was still calling out to Annette cheering assurances of Dave's safety.

"What does she mean about a secret?" said Julia, "I've heard something about a discovery that old Freneau claimed to have made, but I didn't suppose it amounted to anything. Papa never took any notice of it. I don't suppose Carlsen had any motive except to be kind to the boy, although I must say that doesn't seem exactly like him."

"It's perfectly ridiculous to suppose that that boy knows anything about glass-making that Carlsen doesn't know," said Martha. "All the secrets are known to the order, and they protect them religiously."

"But Freneau didn't belong to the order; they wouldn't have him because he was a foreigner," said Julia. "And that is why the men disliked him so, because he pretended to have a secret that he wouldn't tell."

"This pony is so fat that he won't go," said Martha, using the whip quite smartly, to Rory's evident surprise. "It's all your fault, Ju; you give him so much sugar. Yes, I'm going to take the short-cut. I'll be careful. I don't want to get back to the works and find Carlsen gone again."

"I'm not sure that papa would think that this was much better than going to the circus," suggested Julia.

"He won't know; that's the difference," said Martha, promptly. She steered skilfully around the bogs and thank-you-ma'ams in the Honeypot road,



and drove up to the glass-works while Carlsen's horse and buggy were still in the yard.

"Let's go in, just for a minute," said Julia. "It's awfully hot, but it's so pretty to see them blow the bottles and vases. I never cared about the window-glass."

Robin was anxious enough to go in. Here was another way in which she must protect Ken, and this was far less trying than the other, although she feared that Carlsen might gain more influence over Dave than she could possibly do.

They saw Carlsen as soon as the door was opened for them into the furnace-room of the new department. Dave was standing beside him, gazing as if fascinated at a man who was gathering metal on his punty, thrust deep into the molten heart of the furnace. Carlsen came towards them at once with a flush of surprise on his face, and casting a curious glance at Robin.

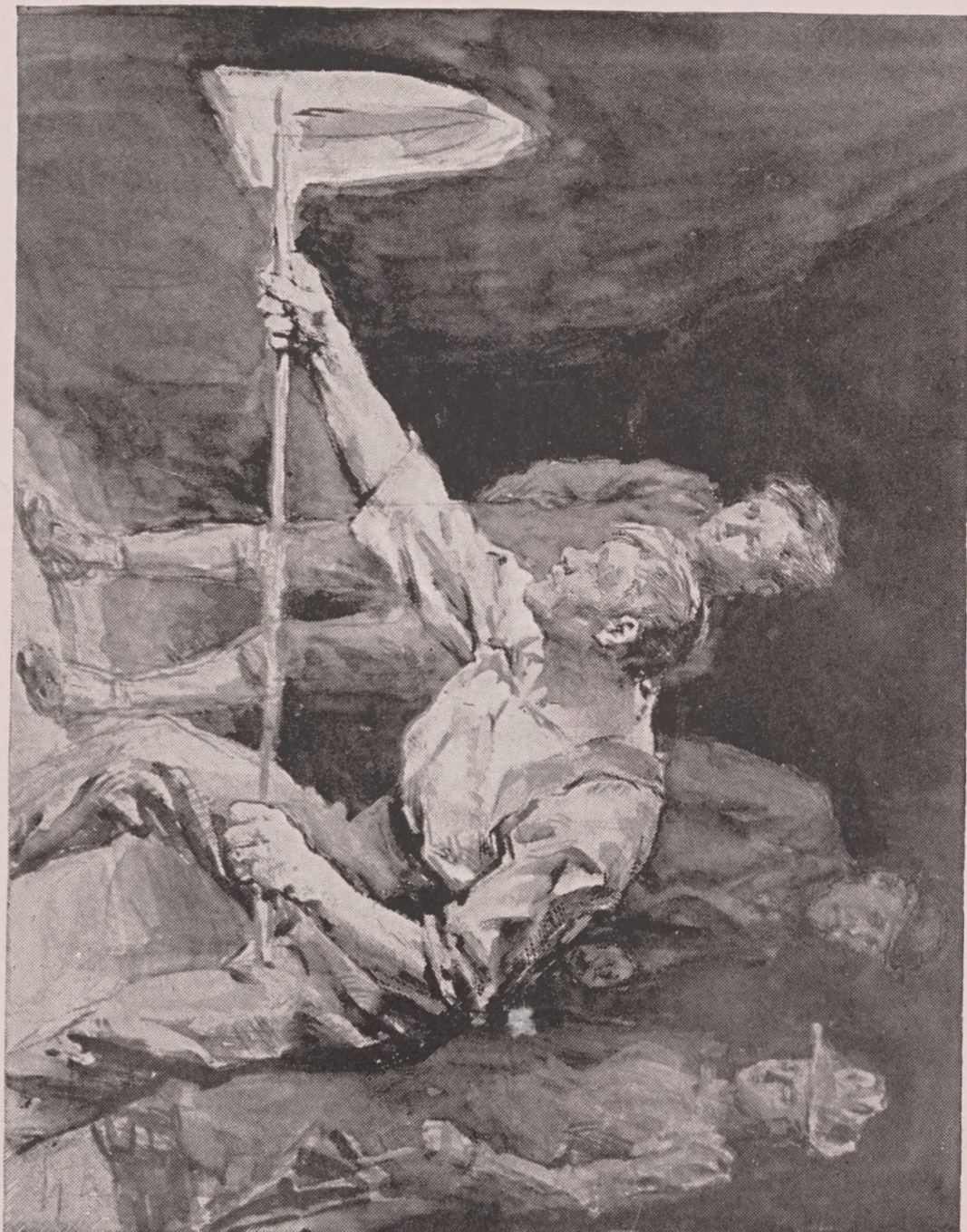
"I want you to do something for me, Carlsen. I want you to get Jo Wilkes clear, so that I needn't go to court," said Martha, imperatively.

"Oh! that's it, is it?" said Carlsen, his brow clearing into a smile. "I'm afraid that's impossible. But perhaps we can get him to plead guilty, and then you won't have to go. I told his mother that was his best chance. She's half crazy about it, and pretty troublesome."

How could she be silent, and let Jo Wilkes's mother suffer like that? If she were only a heroine, like Jeanie Deans, to tell the truth, whatever might come of it! But she—she was weak-minded; Ken had always said so. She was ashamed of being the mate of



“DAVE WAS STILL STANDING BY THE FURNACE, WATCHING WITH FASCINATED GAZE.”









the *Mary Ann*. Ah ! she had not realized, then, what things there were in the world to be ashamed of !

"She pretends to be very indignant at having her son called a thief ; they always do. And he's a pretty obstinate fellow ; but when he finds out that he'll get off easier by owning up—"

There had been a queer fluttering in Robin's ears ; the huge fiery eyes of the furnace danced before her own eyes, and came crowding about her.

"Oh, get him clear—get him clear, can't you?" she cried, as she caught at the iron bar of a bench near her to steady herself, the dancing, crowding eyes made her so dizzy. "He never will confess—he didn't do it!"



## CHAPTER X

"It was so dreadfully hot in there," said Julia, when Robin, carried into the open air, had recovered, and declared, in a determined voice, that she "felt just as well as ever, and was ashamed of having made so much trouble."

"I used to feel just like that every time I went into the furnace-room," added Julia, sympathetically.

"She's so tender-hearted, too," said Jean. "It worried her to hear how badly Jo Wilkes's mother felt. Wasn't that it, partly, Robin? What did you mean, Robin, by saying he didn't do it?"

There was never to be any escape from Jean's straightforward questionings.

A bright color leaped into Robin's pale cheeks. "I—I don't—it didn't seem possible that he could be a common thief; he looks so honest," she faltered, her eyes dropping under Carlsen's shrewd, curious gaze.

"I call that foolish," said Martha. "What does it matter to people like that if they are suspected? He can get a place somewhere. He would be let off easily if he would plead guilty, wouldn't he?"

"Yes, I think that can be managed, if he restores the watch," said Carlsen.

"But I don't care about the watch," said Martha; "that is, compared to the horror of being perched up



on a witness stand, a watch is nothing at all. Get him off, anyway, won't you, Carlsen?"

"I can't say I wonder much at Martha," said Julia; "it must be horrid to go to court. But I shouldn't care so much if I were you, Robin. Of course if there was anything that one could do about it—"

"What could I do? Of course it is of no use to think about it," said Robin, lightly. Carlsen was watching her narrowly. It terrified her to think how much she might have betrayed to his keen wits. "I shall be sorry if Martha has to go to court, that's all. Come, let us go back to the furnace-room. I want to see them make the pretty vases and bottles. Oh, you needn't be afraid! I sha'n't be faint again. I have been in before, many a time, and it's only just at first that I feel the heat. And—and Dave Freneau can go home with us, Mr. Carlsen; we pass his house on our way home, and his sister is very anxious about him." Robin said this, summoning all her courage, as they followed Carlsen back into the furnace-room.

"What a little spitfire she is—that sister of his!" said Carlsen, good-humoredly, although a slight flush that looked like anger had risen to his brow. "I pitied the boy. I used to know him when he was a little chap, and I thought it might amuse him to see the sort of glass-making that he was used to. His father was very skilful at fine work; it was a pity that there was such a prejudice against him on account of his being a foreigner; it made him bitter and hard to get along with. I suppose it was the same here. That girl seemed to think I wanted to



murder her brother. I had a curiosity to see whether he would remember anything about the different processes, or whether he had lost his wits as entirely as people say."

"I'm sure I think it was very good of you; such people are always ungrateful," said Martha.

Dave was still standing by the furnace, watching with a fascinated gaze the workmen as they thrust their punties into the blazing depths to gather metal.

"I wanted him to let me do it, and he wouldn't," he said, complainingly, to Carlsen. His brows were knitted, and he seemed too much absorbed to notice the rest of the party. He even looked at Robin and Jean without seeming to see them.

"Let him take it!" said Carlsen to the workman, who delivered the puntie up to Dave, hesitatingly, and with a look of dismay.

The boy, with his heavy, bewildered face, wandered off with the blazing ball of fire. Those who bustled unconcernedly about the men who bore similar burdens gave him a wide berth. The girls scattered with little cries, which Dave did not seem to hear. Carlsen kept close behind him, watching intently.

Dave went over to one of the benches, but he waved aside an old man who would have taken the tube from him, and himself blew the glass into a globe, and sat down at the bench with it, the old man standing back at a sign from Carlsen, but with a comical look of indignation. "The order wouldn't allow it," he muttered. "He wa'n't nothin' but a tender 'fore he got to be a fool."

Carlsen paid no attention except by a flickering smile.



Dave rolled the globe back and forth on the horizontal bar on each side of him, never lifting his eyes while the glass kept oddly changing its shape; there was a half-smile on his face like that of a child delighted with his toy. He had made a hole in the globe, and enlarged it gradually, though without any apparent care, into a symmetrical opening. By this time the glass had cooled, so that there was nothing more to be done. Carlsen waved back a young man who was approaching, unseen by Dave. The boy looked up and around him in a little bewilderment; then he arose, selected out of all the hurrying throng, with their different burdens, the young man who had been coming to him, and took from his hand the long tube with a disk of red-hot glass upon it, which he instantly fastened to his cool globe. He sat down at the bench again, scratched the globe, and jarred it. The men were leaving their work, and allowing their fiery balls of glass to cool while they watched Dave, until Carlsen's sharp voice aroused them to their duty. There were dissatisfied mutterings about the irregularity of the proceedings, mingled with exclamations of astonishment at the skill of the boy, whose supposed mental condition was speedily reported by those of the old hands who knew Dave.

Off ran Dave to the "glory hole" with his globe, impatiently rejecting the help of the man whose business it was to do this part of the work, and quickly heated the broken end into softness; then back again to the bench, and began to manipulate the globe anew. A minute or two, and there was a perfect lamp-shade under Dave's swift hands. A stroke detached it from the iron rod, and dropped it into a bed of sand.



Dave allowed the small boy, who came running up, to carry it off to the annealing furnace. He looked up pale, and as if just awakened, and wiped his wet face with his handkerchief.

"You did that pretty well, old fellow!" said Carlsen, cordially. And there was a murmur of applause, amid the grumbling of the men, at which Dave flushed with pride.

"He must have done it all consid'able many times," said the old man whose place at the bench Dave had seized. "'Tain't allowed, though—a youngster like him. Where'd you do it, sonny?"

Dave's face clouded. "I don't know," he said, in a puzzled tone.

"He wa'n't anything but a tender in the window-glass house," remarked a boy, in an injured tone.

"I don't know whether I *ever* did it before," said Dave, knitting his brows painfully. "But I've seen it—oh, all the time, somewhere."

"'Twas pretty well done for a boy who has no memory," said Carlsen, in a tone of triumph.

"I can't see how he could do it, when he hardly seems to know any one," said Jean.

"Memory is a curious thing, and injuries to the brain produce very queer results," said Carlsen. "I've been reading about them lately." He looked suddenly at Robin, whose gaze was fixed intently upon him. "My bump of curiosity is very large, and I—I came near studying medicine once," he added, by way of explanation.

"He wants to find out, like Thanny Baker," said Jean, in an aside.

"What the boy has lost is his memory of events,"



continued Carlsen. "Whatever he has been in the habit of doing he can do still. He could do his work just as well as before."

"But the doctor said he mustn't," said Robin. "His brain must have rest."

"I dare say he is right, though I doubt if his memory ever returns," said Carlsen, carelessly, as if it were, after all, a matter of very little consequence.

"Of course it will, when he can remember so much," said Jean, with a kind of indignation. "Anyway, it must be rather good fun to begin all over again. I should like to be just getting acquainted with Robin and the twins and Traddles and Ken. How queer it would be not to know that Ken must be smoothed the right way when he has anything new on, and that Robin likes to make butter-scotch when the wind is east."

Carlsen led the way into another room, where there were samples of colored glass upon a long bench. Dave took up a dainty vase, amber at the bottom and ruby at the mouth, and examined it curiously.

"Did you ever make anything like that?" asked Carlsen, easily.

Dave shook his head after a moment's troubled reflection. "I don't know how," he said. "I think I dreamed something once about colors like that, but it won't come back when I'm awake. Do you know how to do it?" He looked wistfully up at Carlsen.

"I? Oh yes, it's very simple. I'll show you some time," said Carlsen.

"I don't know how they make it—make it—those colors," said Dave, with eager interest.



"There are many different things used to give color to glass," said Carlsen, observing him intently. "It is gold that gives that amber color."

"Amber color—gold! That's it! I knew!" exclaimed Dave, his face lighting up. "I *knew*, but I can't remember names."

"The doctor said he might come to remember by associating ideas—wasn't that it, Robin?—or his memory might come back all at once," said Jean.

"He looks tired now," said Carlsen, quickly cutting short this recalling of the doctor's prophecies. "I will drive him home, or if you would prefer to have him go with you—" He said this politely to Robin, but with a little quizzical smile, which made Robin feel very small and childish and unwarrantably suspicious.

The Hallett girls insisted that Robin and Jean should go home with them to meet the Rawlins girls and Duke, who were coming to tea; but Robin resisted all their entreaties, and, what was still more difficult, the little pleading tug which Jean privately gave her dress skirt. Jean dearly loved a good time, and there was no weight on her spirits which could not be lightly shaken off. Robin was too single-hearted to be able to make merry while all this trouble about Ken was weighing upon her. By promising "solemnly" to go to their tennis-party the next week she finally pacified the girls, and this prospect caused Jean's brow to clear also.

It was settled that the Hallett girls should drive them as far as the Freneau cottage, and Robin and Jean should walk the rest of the way home, while the girls returned to meet their guests. Carlsen came



out after them to tell them of the mosaic glass windows that were to be made, and to ask them to come some day and see the process.

"I want to come—I want to see!" cried Dave, eagerly.

"Oh yes, come any time, when I'm not too busy to look after you, unless your—your friends are afraid that it will tire you too much," said Carlsen; and again that little quizzical smile brought the color to Robin's cheeks.

Martha jumped out of the phaeton and ran back to beg Carlsen again to do all that he could to "get Jo Wilkes off."

"He seems very good-natured. I'm sure he only wanted to amuse Dave; what else could he want?" said Julia.

"I go there again," said Dave, who was tucked into the front of the phaeton, amiably curling his long legs up out of the way. "I liked it. And I—I want to think and think."

Annette rushed out like a whirlwind, and almost dragged Dave from the carriage.

"You have rescued him from that bad man!" she cried, fervently embracing Robin. "And he shall not get him again—never, never! We will run away first—my Dave and I."

"I shall not run away," said Dave, stoutly. "I go over there again soon, to-morrow, where they make glass. I make it myself, amber and ruby." He pronounced the words slowly and with difficulty, and evidently felt great pride that he could remember them.

"You see what that wicked man have done! He



have my Dave be—bewitch!" (Some English words came very hard to Annette, and this happened to be one of them.) She burst into a passion of tears, which caused Dave's brows to contract in wondering annoyance.

"Do stop making such a fuss!" cried Martha Hallett, irritably. "No one will hurt you or your brother if you behave yourselves."

"Great things you do know about it—you who are of those who have try to ruin us!" cried Annette, stamping her foot on her door-stone. "Oh, I wish that the son of the minister had not gone! He would make all right."

"Poor Ken! I'm afraid he couldn't," said Robin, with a long sigh, as the phaeton drove away, the Hallett girls sending back a chorus of reminders about the tennis-party.

"It isn't so long ago that she was saying she wished Dave would keep away from Ken," said Jean, as they walked on homeward, after giving Annette all the consoling assurances of Dave's safety that they could.

"I'm afraid it doesn't make much difference what Annette says," Robin answered, and yet she felt, illogically enough, a certain sense of comfort that any one, even Annette, trusted Ken.

She would trust him, too! It was all a mistake; it was a dreadful nightmare from which she would wake soon. And then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, she stood still in the road; she would go back and proclaim that it was Ken and not Jo Wilkes who had stolen the watch. She could not bear such a burden of guilt, and share in bringing such suffering upon others.



"I wish I had stuck to what I said when I was faint. I wish I hadn't taken it back," she murmured, half-aloud, finding that her resolution failed her utterly when she tried to go back. It was not for Ken's sake, not for her own sake, that she faltered, she said to herself, but her father's suffering face would come between her and the righteous confession. "If I could only tell *some one*! I never was strong enough to bear things alone," thought poor Robin. What would Jean say—honest, single-hearted little Jean, who had had her own conscience troubles about the clove lozenges? But one could not bear to distress her; come what might, she would not tell Jean, Robin resolved. And if mamma were well, were like other mothers; she was not strong, and Ken was her favorite; this very day she had called him "the best one." As for her father, the shock would kill him. No, there was no one to tell, no one. One could say one's prayers, of course. "But that help is so far off," said Robin to herself. Ah! nearer, Robin, than you think—nearer than any of us think!

As for Jean, her mind was dwelling upon sashes. Dear to Jean's heart was a sash, a good wide one, and of a bright color, which would enhance the charms of her new white dress. "Kitty Rawlins has a tennis suit that came from Paris; only think of it!" This was the first of many pathetic remarks of Jean's upon the subject of dress which reached Robin's consciousness. "Don't you think I might have the sash, Robin? Mr. Sears is selling out the ribbon in his store. He only keeps it in the summer, and he isn't going to keep it any more, because the sum-



mer people don't buy it, and there's a beautiful blue—*so* wide!"

"Perhaps I can squeeze it out of the house-keeping money. I'm afraid, but I'll try."

"You ought to have a new dress, Robin."

"Oh, I shall do well enough," said Robin, hastily.

"You don't care for anything, now Ken has gone. I think it's queer, when he wanted to go—catch Ken going if he didn't!—and I'm sure he hasn't been so very pleasant lately. Or is it Jo Wilkes that makes you feel so? I'm sure one can't worry about all the thieves in the world or their mothers. If you're relation to a thief, you must expect to have trouble," added unconscious Jean. "As for Dave Freneau, *I* think he is getting well."

Their mother met them at the door, her eyes swollen with tears. "I won't say that it is heartless, Robin, for you to go about having a good time when your poor brother has gone, we don't know where, but I wonder how you could. Oh, my poor boy, no one cares for him but me!"

Robin kissed her silently; even at fifteen one has learned sometimes that words are useless where the ear is not fitted to hear; and she comforted her by reading the fashions and accounts of the gay doings at Newport.

Her father wished to see her afterwards in his study. He looked paler and more ill than for a long time. He began at once to talk of Ken; it was of Ken that *his* mind was full also.

"Nothing has cut more keenly than that I had no money to give him, Robin," he said. "He had managed to get some somewhere, and begged me not



to worry, dear boy! I suppose he got it by fishing or taking people out sailing in his boat. Well, well; perhaps it was better for him to go!"

"There will be money coming from cranberries before long, papa." Practical comfort was all that she could trust herself to offer, with the great lump in her throat that would not down.

"If you can keep the meadow!—I hope you can keep it." Then followed some talk of stocks that had deteriorated in value, and dividends that were long delayed. "But it takes so little to keep our heads above water, and you and Moira manage so excellently that we shall do it still!" he said cheerfully, at length, although Robin's keen ears detected that the cheerfulness was forced. "But it cuts me to the heart that I should have to let Ken go out into the world penniless! Do you know how much money he had, and where he got it, Robin?"

It was from her father that Jean had inherited her embarrassing straightforwardness of speech, and they both looked one directly in the face.

"I—I—he didn't tell me," papa."

"Well, well, you're not to blame, child. I mustn't distress you about it," said her father, misinterpreting her confusion. "Look out for your cranberries, Robin! We're going to have rain; that will be good for them. You mustn't let the frost catch them."

It rained persistently for nearly a week. Rain might be good for cranberries, but it hindered one from hearing the Sandford news, and discovering whether Jo Wilkes was to be tried for theft.

In spite of everything, Robin and Moira put their



heads together and managed the sash for Jean, and Robin and Jean went to Quansett and bought it, the first bright day—a delicious day, full of breeze and sparkle and perfume; and they had left their father sitting out upon the piazza—a marvel for him, with the children playing around.

It was Prim who came to meet them as they came home—Prim in an excited and exuberant state of mind, an extraordinary thing for Prim, who was usually sedate and seriously explanatory.

"No one got sticky, Wobin," she said, "but a stwange thing happened. We were putting our hair into curl-papers"—in fact, Prim's head was now bristling all over with little sharp paper tails; "I told them it was proper to do our hair up-stairs, but Twaddles would stay where papa was, and we found a piece of newspaper in the study, and there wasn't enough to go wound, and Twaddles was on the settle, and she felt something like paper, and she poked her fingers into a wip in the leather and pulled out—this." Prim unclosed her small clinched fist and showed a ball of crumpled paper. "Oh, Wobin, I think it's the paper the monkey carried off that Ken felt so badly about the day the French boy that got hurt came home. Twaddles wasn't going to give it to me. Twaddles has so much old Adam, at times!" Prim sighed heavily.



## CHAPTER XI

ROBIN spread the paper out upon the broad window-seat in the hall, and tried to decipher it. There were but very few words which were legible to her. Her first impulse was to send it at once to Ken—the precious paper which he had been so angry with her for losing! But on second thought she decided to try the effect of the paper upon Dave's memory. The almost illegible words might mean something to him; they might even bring back the forgotten secret to his mind. What joy it would be if she should have that news to write to Ken! But her heart sank at the thought of Ken, as it always sank now. She had tried to write to him; she had hinted, as carefully as she could, that she might not make him angry, at the baseness of allowing an innocent person to suffer for one's guilt; she had said plainly that no poverty or disgrace was real trouble, but only wickedness; that so far as paying went, she could pay for everything with her cranberries—those cranberries scarcely larger as yet than pin-heads, and at the mercy of drougths and floods and frosts—from which so much was expected! All these things she had written to Ken over and over, and then burned the letters. It was so hard to write such things to Ken, who never took kindly to advice, and was morbidly sensitive to blame. He had written once, a hasty note addressed to his



father, which tried to be high-spirited, but showed homesickness between the lines. At least the others called it homesickness; Robin saw the misery of an accusing conscience.

If Dave should remember, then she could write. Perhaps Ken could be induced to confess then, for it would be comparatively easy; he would be looking forward again to the great fortune to be made by Freneau's discovery.

She stole away as soon as possible—it was scarcely sunset, and there was the long summer twilight before her—with the crumpled paper in her pocket, down the marsh road to Dave's. Jean would feel aggrieved if she should discover that there was a secret with which she was not to be trusted; but it was not her secret, but Ken's and Dave's, Robin had reflected; and, moreover, whatever found a lodgment in Jean's lively little brain was so apt to fly to the end of her tongue.

Dave was sitting on the door-step in a brown-study.

"He will not speak to me," said Annette, in sullen grief. "He will only say he want to think. He think himself to sleep, and wake up and think again. It was less sad when he drew the little cart."

Robin spread the paper out before him, but he knit his brows over it without any apparent result.

"He can read writing. Old Mrs. Morse said she did not believe it, but he can," said Annette.

"These are uncommon words," explained Robin. "Dave, what is that?—oxide of what?"

A flush slowly overspread Dave's pale face. "I know! I know! If anybody should say it I should remember. *He* wanted me to remember, that man





“ROBIN SPREAD THE PAPER OUT UPON THE BROAD WINDOW-SEAT.”







at the glass-works, but I couldn't. I don't know just what you want me to do, you and he," said Dave, with his slow, difficult utterance.

"It is that always—to find out the secret. Oh, I am glad he cannot remember, my poor Dave! He would tell it to that man," said Annette.

"I wouldn't tell it to him, Dave," said Robin, earnestly. "If you remember anything that you used to know, I wouldn't tell him."

"It is he who tells me," said Dave; "he knows everything; he will make me remember when I go over there again. You cannot help me; you have never know much—girls!"

There was a scornful impatience in Dave's tone, which was different from the apathy which he had shown since his injury.

"It is that man who have the evil-eye!" cried Annette, becoming tearful. "Dave have never speak to me like that before."

"I think I have tired him with the paper, Annette. The doctor said we must not tire him, you know. It's of no use; he never will remember," she added to herself. But she reflected afterwards that she was scarcely able to judge of Dave's condition and its probable results. She would send the paper to Ken. And yet of what use would it be for him to know? He would not come home; oh no, he could not come home! He would only be troubled to no purpose. "I'm guilty of such great and dreadful shirking that a little shirking like that doesn't signify!" said Robin, bitterly, to herself, as she walked, with a heavy heart, through the deepening shadows of the marsh road.



She had tried to inquire about Jo Wilkes in Quansett that day, but she was afraid of betraying her anxiety, afraid of the sound of her voice when she mentioned his name or Ken's; and innocent Jean, whose mind was centred upon sashes, could not be induced, by means of hints, to ask the questions. Robin had strong doubts of Martha's ability to get him off. Carlsen had evaded her entreaties, she thought. Had his keen eyes looked suspiciously at her after she had cried out that Jo was innocent, or had she imagined it? At all events, she could not rid herself of the impression that Carlsen would bring Jo Wilkes to trial, in spite of Martha, if he could, and get her there as a witness also, if he could find any pretext.

With only such thoughts as these for company, it was a relief to see a small, sturdy, barefooted figure approaching in the distance—Thanny Baker coming to meet her.

Thanny had been in a somewhat subdued state of mind since the show. He had made the acquaintance of Bert Cressy, of Goose Creek, who took the obscure but lively part of the lion's hind-legs, and the story of his experiences had dampened his growing ambition for a show-man's life. According to Bert Cressy "stiddy days' works" was what life amounted to, even in a show, and very cramping and monotonous work, too—and work that paid scarcely as well as fishing. Thanny, with all his visions, was enough of a Yankee to wish to know how it paid. And that zebra was undoubtedly painted, though Thanny hadn't found out what the creature really was, or how it was done. He had come to a realizing sense of the hollowness of shows. He doubted whether there was



anything much more enjoyable in life than to have the *Mary Ann's* sheet in one's hand, in a spanking breeze, and know just how to control her, as one would control a restive horse.

"A Cape feller is jest about as well off as any of 'em," he said to himself, foregoing, for a time at least, his dreams of being a show-man, a cowboy, or a soldier.

"I've been lookin' and lookin' for you," he announced, as soon as Robin came in sight. "I took that feller up to Goose Creek, and he paid me a dollar. And then—and then"—Thanny lowered his voice mysteriously as he joined her—"I come near gettin' into an orfle scrape."

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Robin, who felt that troubles were thickening on every side. "But you didn't, Thanny?"

"I guess I was smart enough for them fellers," said Thanny, proudly. "You see, I was comin' by Gridiron Cove on my way home, and 'twas high tide, and I was pretty well inshore, and a feller sung out to me to come up nearer. I went in as nigh as I could, and says he, 'I want to hire your boat to-night after sundown; I expect the wind's a-goin' to hold,' says he. 'I only want to go out there a little piece,' says he, pointin' out beyond the Chunks, 'and I'll pay you well.' Says I, 'I don' know who you be,' for he wasn't summer folks; he looked kind of rough, and he didn't b'long 'round here. He didn't say anything to that, but it flashed right across me that it was one of them fellers from the glass-works that made the disturbance that day at the show."

"Then they got clear, did they? Thanny, do you



know whether Jo Wilkes is—is going to be tried for stealing?" asked Robin, eagerly.

"Well, I'm a-comin' to him," said Thanny, slightly aggrieved at the interruption. "He pretended not to hear me askin' him who he was, but says he again, 'I'll pay you well. You leave your boat here at the Cove jest as soon as it's dark to-night, and say nothing to nobody, and you'll find it here again before nine o'clock; and name your price,' says he. 'But, mind you, hold your tongue,' says he. Well, I couldn't think, for the life of me, what he was up to, and I kept still. 'Five dollars!' he hollers, and 'All right,' says I, for I couldn't seem to think of anything out of the way that he *could* be up to. But I hadn't got far before it come over me jest like a flash that Bert said this afternoon that that vessel that was anchored in the shoal water out there beyond the Chunks was Hank Colson's schooner, the *Wasp*. He said she'd started from Fleetwell for the Banks, and he couldn't make out what she was a-layin' to out there for. He went clear out there to make sure 'twas the *Wasp*, she was actin' so sing'lar. You see, Hank Colson used to work over to Sandford, and he and Jo Wilkes was great friends; they both belonged down to Fleetwell. Thinkin' of that put me in mind of what I heard a feller say down on the Quansett wharf yesterday. 'That rickety old jail,' says he. It's jest as plain as daylight." Thanny's chubby freckled face was pale, and his eyes fairly dilated with excitement. "They're goin' to get Jo Wilkes out of jail and carry him over to Hank Colson's vessel to-night. They couldn't get a boat down to Quansett; they'd get catched in no time; so they



thought I was a small feller and you was a girl, and we wouldn't know any better than to let 'em have the *Mary Ann*."

"Oh, Thanny, why didn't— Oh, what shall I do?" cried Robin, trembling all over with excitement. If Jo Wilkes, innocent Jo Wilkes, could only get off like that!

"You needn't feel so bad," said Thanny. "Of course we haven't got to do it. We should get took up fast enough if we did. As soon as I thought what it all meant, I hollered back to him that the *Mary Ann* wasn't any such a boat as that. She wa'n't in the business of helpin' thieves to escape. I can't say that he heard me. I was a good ways off. But if them fellers do get took in waitin' there for the *Mary Ann*, 'twill serve 'em right. I expect he'd been skulkin' round among them sand-hills and scrub trees at Gridiron Cove a consid'able spell waitin' for me. I saw him on the wharf at Quansett when I went down along with my passenger, but he didn't darst to ask me for the boat down there before folks. Kind of a joke to ask for our boat to get Jo Wilkes off in, when 'twas our friends, those Hallett girls, that the watch was stole from, wasn't it?" added Thanny, with loyal pride.

"I suppose they can get a boat—don't you, Thanny?" asked Robin, eagerly, her mind filled with confusing doubts and fears, which she must conceal from Thanny.

"Boats enough, but folks would be so apt to suspect 'em that they don't darst to ask, don't you see?" said Thanny. "He ain't so very well known down to Quansett, and if he tries to hire a row-boat the



feller that owns it is likely to say, I'll row you anywhere that you want to go. Bein' night-time, you know, would kind of make 'em wonder where he was goin'. And then it's likely to get 'round that Hank Colson's schooner is layin' to out there. That 'll tell folks the story if they're anyway sharp," said Thanny, with a pardonable consciousness of his own gifts in that direction.

"Then—then you think they won't be able to get a boat?" stammered Robin.

"I don't b'lieve there's a mite of danger. There's old Solomon Gross, they won't catch him nappin', and Lije Briggs is orfle partickeler about his boats, and 'twas Steve Prettygo that was talkin' about the Sandford jail bein' a rickety old thing, so he'd be apt to be on his guard. But still I've been thinkin' that mebbe I ought to go down and warn 'em, or over to Sandford, because perhaps he hasn't broke out of jail yet." Thanny paused irresolutely in the road.

"I wouldn't go, Thanny!" said Robin, hastily. "He must have got out by this time, if—if they wanted the boat as soon as it was dark. Why, Thanny, it's almost dark now! They'll be waiting." There was intense anxiety in Robin's tone.

Thanny chuckled a little.

"They'll *have* to wait for the *Mary Ann*, I guess! But I'll tell you what, I ought to have set an officer after 'em! I didn't seem to think of anything except that 'twas lucky I was too smart to get caught that way; why, they'd put you in jail for lettin' a boat to a thief to get away in!"

"But you're not sure, Thanny; and if you had sent an officer there, and then found it was a mistake,



how you would have been laughed at!" said Robin. She knew the weak joint in Thanny's armor; he could bear anything better than to be laughed at.

"But—but come to think of it"—Robin's breath came hard in her eagerness—"I *would* go over to Sandford, and see whether Jo Wilkes has escaped. It's growing dark, but you wouldn't be afraid."

"Afraid! Well, I rather guess not!" laughed Thanny. "And if he has got out, why, I can tell 'em jest where to find him! Instead of the *Mary Ann* that they're waitin' for, them fellers will find the sheriff after 'em!"

Off started Thanny on the run. Ordinarily he would have whistled to keep up his courage in that dark road, but now he was too eager to think of fear.

Robin called after him: "Thanny, I wouldn't—wouldn't tell! Perhaps he didn't do it."

But Thanny didn't hear. And, after all, what could she say? If she told him that she knew Jo Wilkes to be innocent, would he not wonder and wonder, and perhaps suspect the truth? Thanny, who was sometimes so "sharp!"

If Jo Wilkes could only get a boat—could get away! It was a sudden resolve which had led her to try to get rid of Thanny. Perhaps it was too late, but she would try. If it could be done, she would do it!

She could not go alone; Moira must go with her. That would involve delay; Moira was so dull and slow, but there was no one else whom she could trust.

If Thanny had only not been so "sharp!" It was not the thing for a girl to do, and the night was so dark. But to save Ken! Would she not do more



than this to save Ken? Jo Wilkes could go away and live down the disgrace; she could pay for the watch—that could be managed in some way—and Ken—Ken would see how weak and wicked he had been, and truly “repent him of the evil,” and perhaps some time, in some way, they could make amends to Jo Wilkes.

All this time her feet were swifter than her thoughts. Stealing softly up to the back door she found Moira sitting on the steps, enjoying the evening coolness after her day’s labor.

“Come with me, quick, Moira! You can’t wait, not even for your shoes!”

“Small loss,” muttered Moira, as Robin cast a dismayed glance at her feet.

There were very good things about Moira; she grumbled vaguely as she scrambled down the bluffs after Robin, but she asked no questions. Moira was a devoted soul; she would follow Robin anywhere, especially with the privilege of going barefooted.

“The saints presarve us, is it intil the bit boat we’re go’n’, Miss Robin dear?” said poor Moira, as they reached the slip where the *Mary Ann* rocked lightly on the water.

The wind had scarcely “held;” there was only a light breeze now, and a placid sky was appearing through the windy clouds.

“Sure we’ll be throwned entirely, Miss Robin, and for the loikes iv me ’tis no matther.”

“Get in, Moira! I won’t let you drown, and there’ll be a moon; it will be quite light soon,” said Robin, reassuringly. “I’m only going as far as Gridiron Cove, and the wind will be in our favor.”



"Sure, Miss Robin darlint, the wind that 'll blow ye down convaynient is niver the wind that 'll blow ye back again!" said Moira, with a sigh, stepping obediently into the boat nevertheless.

To get back again! Robin had scarcely thought of that, and she dismissed the thought now; to get to Gridiron Cove in time was all her care. Never before had she felt such satisfaction in her skill in managing a boat. The *Mary Ann's* sail swelled to the breeze, and her bow cut the water with a little *swish*, and the bluffs slipped away from them, and the Chunks, low-lying rocks that looked in the semi-darkness like great sea-monsters, loomed nearer. A great red moon climbed up out of the sea, and in the moonlight's track across the water Robin could catch the dim outline of the vessel which, according to Thanny's view, was intended to carry Jo Wilkes to freedom.

Was any little boat already flitting across to it from the shore? Robin strained her eyes in vain for any glimpse of one.

Was Gridiron Cove ever so far away before? And surely the breeze was dying out. By this time Thanny might have sent an officer in search of poor innocent Jo Wilkes skulking behind the sand-hills.

The Cove was a deep inlet, with two or three long and regular sand-bars at its mouth which had given it its name.

"Sure ye'll not be afther puttin' in at this dark place, Miss Robin, darlint!" wailed Moira. "If we gets aground what 'll we do at all, at all? An' it's mesilf heard a quare n'ise behint the threes!"



## CHAPTER XII

THERE was a queer noise, but it might have been only the wind; it ceased as they drew near, and a shape which Robin had taken for a man proved to be only a shadow. She would not retreat now, and Moira must be encouraged, although her own heart was thumping. She wished she had taken Thanny into her confidence and sent him with the boat; and yet how could she have brought herself to betray Ken? No half explanations would have done for "sharp" Thanny! But it was too late now for retreat or regrets.

"We must land here, Moira," she said. "We can't push up any farther into the sand. You won't mind that it is wet with your bare feet."

Moira predicted wild-cats and assassins, and called fervently upon the saints.

"The road is such a little ways, Moira, and we can run," said Robin, cheerfully.

"Run, is it? If iver I has the use of me two legs on thry land!" said Moira, heartily. "An' is it lave the boat we will, Miss Robin? Sure, whin the tide do be high ag'in—"

"I'm leaving it for some one, Moira; it will be used and returned, I—I expect."

After all, might it not be a fool's-errand upon which she had come? Would the man have trusted



to Thanny? It might even be possible that Thanny's theory of the intended rescue of Jo Wilkes was all a mistake.

"An' why wouldn't they come afther it be daylight, like honust Christians?" asked Moira, indignantly. "Sure it do be blood-cruddlin' work for a bit thing loike ye. But for me knowin' the great sinse ye have—"

"Oh, I haven't a bit of sense, Moira; not a bit!" cried Robin, although always under her breath, for the very trees seemed to have ears. "But I had to do this. I *had* to, Moira!"

They had dragged the boat up as far as they could upon the sand by this time, and Moira made good her intention of using her legs. Moira could run, although no one would have believed it possible. She dragged Robin along with her until the latter halted resolutely as they came in sight of the road.

"Moira, there can't be any danger now; we've come over this road so many times in the evening. Wait a minute! Look there through the open space." The moonlight silvered a small sail drifting out of Gridiron Cove. "They're off already!" Robin drew a long, long, half-sobbing breath. "I'm glad I came, Moira. I'm glad I came! You would be glad if you knew. Oh, Moira, it was to save Ken. It was so I need never tell of something that he did—something awfully wrong, Moira. Oh, poor Ken! and it isn't right—it never will be right; but I *had* to save Ken, and now no one will suffer—much." Robin added the last word with a sudden recollection of Jo Wilkes's mother.



"Is it Masther Kin?" said Moira, bewildered. "Sure, an' I thought him far away!"

"I don't mean that he is in the boat. I can't tell even you, Moira; but Ken did something awful—something wicked."

"Sure it's dramin' ye are, Miss Robin dear! He niver done anythin' wicked—niver in the livin' worruld! Masther Kin, indade! He do be a b'y, wid the thryin' ways iv a b'y; but don't I know the good hairt in him? Is it wicked, ye says? Miss Robin dear, some rashkills is desavin' ye!" Moira's deep rough voice was tremulous with feeling.

It was with Moira as with her father and mother, thought Robin. Ken was "the best one." She was far from resenting this, as Jean did. She loved Ken too dearly for that. If one could only believe dear stupid old Moira; but when one *knew*!

"Anyway, it's right now—no, not right—oh, Moira, I wish I were a heroine! There was a girl once who wouldn't tell a lie, or even act one, to save her sister's life; wasn't that splendid? But I am weak and wicked—"

"An' it's yersilf now that's wicked! Sure I niver heard the loike iv such a wicked family!" said Moira, who, trudging along the highway, with the moon serenely bearing them company, had forgotten her fears sufficiently to be jocular. "What iver has got intil your bit head, Miss Robin darlint? Sure if thim rashkills don't bring back the boat—Masther Kin's boat— The saints be good til us! what's that?"

"It's only a carriage, Moira; it's nothing to be afraid of." Robin had scarcely been able to suppress



“THE MOONLIGHT SILVERED A SMALL SAIL DRIFTING OUT OF GRIDIRON COVE.”









a scream at the sudden sound, but her quicker wits told her at once what it was.

A man in the carriage which was coming towards them leaned out to look curiously at them. Robin shrank back with a half-uttered cry at sight of Carlsen.

"Miss—Miss Dinsmore!" He stopped his horse at once. "You must allow me to carry you home."

"Sure I'm here to take care of her, sorr, an' we'll go our lane!" said Moira, with dignity.

"But it's a long walk from Quansett, and a lonely road," insisted Carlsen; "and I am sure Miss Dinsmore's father—"

"We're quite used to the road, and not at all afraid, thank you," said Robin, with decision, drawing Moira along.

"I wish I had let him carry us home, Moira; it would have delayed him!" exclaimed Robin, as the sound of wheels died away on the sandy road. "Did you see the other man, Moira? I think it was the sheriff, and they are going to Gridiron Cove."

"Joy go wid 'em! I'd rather thim than me was goin' to Gridiron Cove the night!" said Moira, gayly.

"He wanted to find out whether we were coming from Quansett, Moira. I don't like that man," said Robin, earnestly.

"Sure oursilves needn't loike nor disloike the loikes iv him," said Moira, with a grand air. "But if thim rashkills don't be afther bringin' back Masther Kin's boat—"

"They will, Moira, never fear."

"It's a quare night's woruk; and though ye have great sinse—"



"Trust me, then, Moira, and believe that the boat will be safe," said Robin, thinking it unwise again to disclaim the possession of that valuable quality "great sinse."

"Niver belave the ould rashkills that tellt ye Masther Kin was bad; niver belave thim, Miss Robin!" said Moira, as they parted for the night, Moira going up to her room with a few subdued mutterings about her "ould bones," and Robin going with as serene a countenance as she could assume to take Jean's place in reading to their father.

"You're all out of breath, dear; where have you been?" said her father.

"Running a little," said Robin.

Jean broke forth into complaints. "She's always going off by herself like that nowadays, and having something on her mind; and Moira wasn't anywhere, and I had to put the children to bed. I wouldn't mind that, of course; Robin does so much"—Jean made this amendment after being convicted of selfishness by her father's eyes—"but I don't like to be treated as if I were a child myself, when I shall be thirteen next month."

Jean's grievance was laughed at, and in the diversion thus created no one remembered to ask again where Robin had been. Her father trusted her so, Robin thought, with a little pang. But what would he have had her do? Tell the truth at once, at whatever cost! He would not have spared Ken, the real criminal, at Jo Wilkes's expense; she knew that. And queerly enough, Robin felt a strong thrill of pride at her father's goodness, the goodness to which she thought it was impossible for her to attain.



What she had done was for his sake—for Ken's sake and his; there was a crumb of comfort in that. Now she must pay for the watch; she must send the money anonymously to Martha Hallett. She would understand that it was "conscience money;" perhaps she would think that Jo Wilkes sent it. And Jo Wilkes—she must try to follow his fortunes, to make amends for the wrong done him; and she must show Ken how wrong he had been, and try to bring him to repentance. To bring Ken to repentance! that was by no means the easiest part of her task.

She was reading one of the early fathers of the Church—Jean had finished the newspaper—and it was hard to keep her mind upon it even sufficiently to "mind the stops." How tiresome he was, this dull old father, with his "hierarchies" and his "heptarchies" and his "anthologies." Could he ever have known the sharp troubles of living, like having a brother whom he must shield although it were wicked? Robin had always liked to read about the martyrs who had "scorned the rack and flame," but she never should again—never again; it would be too great a reproach. Would Thanny try to see her, to tell her about Jo Wilkes, when he returned from Sandford? She expected at every moment to hear him at the door. He would not be late, for Cap'n Saul insisted upon early hours. Thanny would see no reason for privacy, and would talk about the matter before every one, and how should she bear it? How much did Carlsen suspect, and would he ever accuse her? Would Thanny observe the absence of the *Mary Ann* when he went down



to the slip to cross to Lobster Point? And how would she account for it if he did?

Filled as she was with these anxieties, it was small wonder that Robin mispronounced the ancient father's long words until the listener's brow contracted more and more.

"You don't read as well as usual, Robin. We'll give it up for to-night. I'm sure you are tired," he said at length. And Robin, although she protested, closed the book with a long sigh of relief.

She was up the next morning at the first peep of daylight. The thought of Gridiron Cove was like a nightmare, but she must go down there alone to bring home the *Mary Ann*, if, indeed, it had been left there according to the agreement made with Thanny.

She ran down the bluffs to the pier. She would go down in the row-boat, and if she should find the *Mary Ann*— These anxious reflections were interrupted by the sight of the *Mary Ann* fastened to the slip as usual, and looking as trim and tidy as if she had never been off on a nocturnal trip away beyond the Chunks.

There was a smooth flat stone upon her stern seat, and when Robin lifted it a five-dollar bill was disclosed.

"I didn't think of that," said Robin to herself, wrinkling her brows over this new perplexity. It was the *Mary Ann's* business this summer to earn money, but Robin could not feel that this was lawful gain. "But I know what I will do with it!" she exclaimed aloud the next moment.

What she did do with it was to enclose it in an envelope, and send it by mail, without any explana-



tion, to Jo Wilkes's mother, and it was a nine days' pleasurable wonder to the poor woman and the little crippled girl, who were preparing to return to their old friends at Fleetwell, where, as the mother constantly repeated, "No one would believe that her Jo was a thief."

But the sending of the money was only a slight balm to Robin's conscience.

She had scarcely time to slip the money into her pocket that morning when Thanny's row-boat came in sight, and Thanny's keen little eyes were upon her. "Geewhittaker! there she is, ain't she?" he cried. "Well, as true as you're a livin' sinner, Miss Robin, she wa'n't here when I went acrost last night!"

Thanny's face was full of excitement as he hopped out of his boat upon the slip.

"What fine perch, Thanny!" said Robin, displaying great interest in the string of fish in his hand.

"Ain't they stunners? Saul made me go and catch some for breakfast. We had pork-fat and hardtack, but Saul likes high livin', so I'm goin' to carry these up to Moira. Say, do you s'pose them fellers got the *Mary Ann*? He *had* broke out of jail, Jo Wilkes had, and them dead 'n' alive Sandford folks had jest found it out! I happened to come acrost the new manager. He was jest goin' home from the works. Folks says he's there night and day. He's so full of business. He's makin' new plans and—"

"You met Carlsen, and you told him. Go on, Thanny," interrupted Robin, with feverish eagerness.

"He listened, but he didn't seem so much worked up as he ought to have been. He said he'd get the



sheriff, and drive right over to Gridiron Cove. He said I'd ought to have told of it sooner, but he didn't seem to be in any great of a hurry himself. I tell *you*, what Bert Crocker told me was true. I met him a little while after, and I told him. What if Carlsen did tell me I might as well not say anything about it? 'Twa'n't his business; and Saul b'longs to the Law and Order League, and I ain't goin' to give thieves a chance to get away if the glass folks *don't* want 'em caught."

"Don't want them caught?" echoed Robin, interrogatively.

"That's what Bert Crocker says. He says they're havin' such a row with the men over there, anyhow, that they don't want to make things any worse. Jo Wilkes was a fav'rite, and the men wouldn't b'lieve he stole that watch, and they threatened to burn down the works if he was convicted. That's what Bert Crocker says. That new man, with his difrunt ways, and takin' no notice of the union, has got 'em all stirred up. Bert says some folks said it was the worst day Reuben Hallett ever saw when his daughter had Jo Wilkes took up for stealin' her watch. But it seems to me its kind of hard if girls have got to have their watches stole and say nothin', jest because their fathers are glass manufacturers. Say, do you suppose that them fellers come up here and hooked the *Mary Ann*?"

"No, I don't think they did," said Robin, slowly.

"Well, all I know is when I come down here last night there wasn't any boat layin' here at this slip, but just your row-boat and my row-boat that I come over in."



"It was late, and you were in a hurry, and—and moonlight is so deceitful, Thanny," stammered Robin, hating herself for her duplicity.

"If you're hintin' that I was so scairt 'cause 'twas after nine o'clock that I didn't know the *Mary Ann* from a shadder, well, then, I ain't no such afraid-cat!" said Thanny, indignantly. "A feller that has come through the marsh road all alone without whistlin' a note ain't apt to get scairt right out here in the moonlight in sight of his own house."

"I didn't think that you were afraid," said Robin, "and perhaps the boat was gone, but it doesn't matter, since she has come back safe and sound."

"You don't b'lieve but what she was here!" said Thanny, sagely. "You wouldn't take it so cool if you thought she'd been helpin' a thief to get away."

"I'll take the fish up to Moira, Thanny. It was very good of you to remember us, and oh, Thanny, if you should hear anything more about Jo Wilkes, be sure to tell me. But I—I wish you wouldn't say anything about the boat to anybody."

"She don't b'lieve it. She thinks I was too scairt to see out of my eyes," said Thanny to himself, feeling more angry with his friend and shipmate than he had ever felt before. "I shouldn't wonder a mite if Saul was right when he says there ain't no dependin' on girls. No matter how much a feller thinks of 'em, they'll suspect him of bein' scairt. I'll just find out where the *Mary Ann* went to last night, and I'll prove to her that I wa'n't mistaken, as sure as my name is Thanny Baker."

Unconscious of the depth of the wound which Thanny's pride had received, Robin went on her way,



feeling that matters had taken a fortunate turn. Since so many people were willing that Jo Wilkes should escape, there was likely to be but little investigation of the manner of his going. No one, except perhaps Carlsen, would suspect that the *Mary Ann* had any share in it, and of what advantage would it be to Carlsen to make his suspicions known? She was afraid of Carlsen, but she had been afraid of him since he had looked at her so curiously that day at the works, when she had cried out that Jo Wilkes was innocent. It seemed to her that he had understood in a flash that Ken had the watch. But she thought that he would not betray Ken unless it were for his interest to do so. If Ken knew the secret of Freneau's discovery, Carlsen might use his suspicions to make him divulge it; but since that was locked up in poor Dave's injured brain, for Carlsen to persecute them would answer no purpose, and Robin thought that Carlsen, full as he was of plans for furthering his own interests, would not trouble himself about anything that was to no purpose. At the worst, how could he prove anything against Ken? Robin's fifteen-year-old brains bade fair to become as acute as a lawyer's with much worrying over these painful problems.

Lawn parties go on, though troubles may lie heavy at one's heart. And at the last moment it was discovered that Robin's old mohair dress would not do; the latest darn was so perversely conspicuous, Mamma Dinsmore said, that it must never be displayed to the Rawlins girls, who were so unfamiliar with darns. There was an old pink muslin which could be made more presentable by the aid of ribbons, and Mamma



Dinsmore opened a trunk full of treasures—"relics of ould dacency," Moira called them. Robin didn't like to have her do it, because she always cried over them, and—poor little mamma, Robin said, and would not suffer any one to hint that she could be selfish—she did not like to see her precious pretty things worn by others, even by her own daughter. There are a few mothers who are not, and cannot be, motherly, and that is why the eldest daughter at the house on the bluffs had her hands and heart so full.

Ribbons that concealed the shabbiness of the old muslin came out of the treasure trunk; and, oh joy for Jean! some hair ribbons which just matched her sash. There were some gold-wire bracelets—Robin had to coax for those for Jean—and that small person's cup ran over as they set forth to the lawn party. Parties were delightful, and pretty clothes too. How happy she might be, thought Robin, if only carking care would not perch upon her shoulder along with the pink satin bows!

"I'm so glad you've come!" cried Martha, running to meet them, as the servant ushered them into the hall. "The Gifford girls are already here, and now Ju will see that it's too late to put people off!"

"Didn't she want us?" asked Robin, in natural dismay at this reception.

"Oh, Ju is such a goose, and she *has* had a lot of trouble," said Martha. "She has to have hot crimps, you know, her hair is so straight, and she heated her pins too hot, and burnt half her bangs off! Fancy, one side is burned away up to the roots! And poor Ju has an Alpine forehead. She did look too funny for anything. I could have twisted some hair around



*some way* to cover it, but poor Ju thinks so much of looks! She cried, and wanted me to put people off—at ten minutes past four, and the Giffords' carriage at the gate! 'From four to eight,' you know, the cards said. We wanted it all in the evening, the grounds look so pretty with lanterns; but Mrs. Rawlins put it into mamma's head that girls who were not old enough to be out ought not to receive at all in the evening. We had hard work to make her consent to eight o'clock!"

"And has Julia really got only half a bang?" asked Jean, sympathetically.

"Oh, I was telling you, wasn't I? Well, poor Ju was in perfect despair, when Miss Ferris came to the rescue. She's a dear old thing, after all; but then, of course, it doesn't matter whether she has any hair or not. You know her hair is just like Ju's; very light, with no particular color. Well, she cut off all the hair she had, so she'll have to wear a breakfast cap all the time, to make a fringe for Ju! They're fastening it on and crimping it now, but Ju keeps saying that if the party could be put off until to-morrow, she should look as well as ever. There isn't much time to arrange it, but—poor dear Ju!—it doesn't make much difference, you know. Oh, I forgot, Carlsen's little girl just brought over this hair ribbon, which she says her father thinks is yours. Just think of his noticing that you wore a blue-and-white checked hair ribbon! And she says that he found it away over in Gridiron Cove! It isn't yours, is it?"

"Robin hasn't been to Gridiron Cove, have you, Robin?" asked Jean.



### CHAPTER XIII

ROBIN held the bit of checked ribbon in her hand, and looked at it in a kind of helpless dismay, while Martha, too much excited by her position as hostess to think of what seemed to her a trifle, rattled on, fortunately drowning Jean's persistent questions, and even making the questioner forget them, which it was very unusual for her to do, for Jean's bump of curiosity was almost as large as Thanny Baker's.

"What do you think? I've had an idea!" cried Martha. "Miss Ferris was always wanting us to have ideas, and now one has come to me. Ju has always owned that I was wonderfully clever in getting rid of Miss Ferris, and now I'm going to do it for good."

"When she has just been so kind? I think she's nice," said Jean, severely.

"Oh, she'll be better off; she has a horrid time with us," said Martha, frankly. "You know Uncle Ambrose Gifford? He's an old dear—a bachelor, or widower, or something—and preaches in old Depford. I was running through the hall in search of some sharp scissors when Miss Ferris offered to sacrifice her locks, and I saw him in the library talking with papa. I ran in and told about it. I made such a pretty story of her devotion that Uncle Ambrose was touched, I'm sure. I've seen him shying up to



her several times. And I killed two birds with one stone without intending it. I made a good impression upon papa, who has been dreadfully cross to me of late, as if I were to blame about that watch. He said he was glad to see some sign of my appreciating my governess. I'm going to show my appreciation by marrying her to Uncle Ambrose Gifford! I've really *got* to get rid of her!" Martha's brow darkened suddenly. "She's taken to watching me, and she comes up behind me so suddenly that she makes me jump. I'm sure I don't know what she has got into her head; perhaps she is going to be crazy. Oh, there are the Farrar girls! Isn't that a hat?"

Martha was welcoming a host of girls, of a great variety of clothes and manners. Their father insisted upon their sending invitations with much less discrimination than they would have liked to use since their New York winters, and the grandchildren of some of those who "had helped him on in the world" wore the homespun dress and manners of the stay-at-home girls and boys of the Cape.

Did Carlsen know what Ken had done, and why she had helped Jo Wilkes to escape? To say that he had found the ribbon in Gridiron Cove was certainly as much as to say, "I know that you were there the night when Jo Wilkes escaped." This thought was torturing Robin while she tried to respond to the merry greetings of her friends. It was a little relief to see Duke Rawlins coming towards her, making his way painfully, but with a bright face, through the gay groups on the great shady lawn. She could not tell him—if she only might!—but some bits of the quotation he had read to her



which he had said helped him came to her with a kind of comfort. That was a good grim bit about the man who "when his legs were smitten off had fought upon his stumps!" If only she had done absolutely right! What would Duke say to know just what they had done, Ken and she?

"I have a letter from Ken," he said, eagerly, as he reached her. "I want you to hear something there is in it. Will you come down here under the oak-tree? The others are all going to the other side; the music is in the old summer-house. We shall be quite quiet. But perhaps you are in a hurry to dance or play tennis?"

Robin shook her head dolefully; poor Robin, whose feet had been wont to tingle at the sound of a merry tune, would she ever wish to dance again?

"I knew you would be glad to hear from Ken," said Duke, a little doubtfully, evidently puzzled by her manner. "He said he had only written a scrap of a letter home. Poor Ken! he was awfully in the dumps when he went away, but I think things are better with him now."

There was a seat under a great oak-tree, on the sunny side of the lawn, and Robin sat down upon it, turning a pale and wistful face towards Duke.

"A fellow learns a great deal in next to no time when he goes out into the world with little in his pocket and less in his head, like me," read Duke. He had skipped the first part of the letter, with a little murmur of impatience; afterwards Robin remembered that. "'I knew that I wasn't much of a fellow, but I didn't see how many chances I was wasting. My sister told me so, but a fellow doesn't



like having girls telling him what he ought to do. She's twice the fellow that I am, though, my sister Robin, and she won't do anything she thinks is wrong, not to save her life.' "

"Oh, oh, he doesn't know!" murmured Robin, with a choking sensation.

" 'She's pretty proud, and she minds'—h'm—h'm—that's nothing," said Duke, interrupting his reading. " 'I'm afraid I was pretty hateful to her, and to them all, at home, and they must have been glad to get rid of me. The work here is pretty rough, and it makes a fellow flare up inside to be ordered round as I am; but so far I've had sense enough to keep my wrath to myself. The boy isn't much of anybody in a great manufacturing establishment, and he isn't going to be put up with as he is at home. But I think if I behave myself there is going to be a chance to learn the business, and that's what I want more than anything else in the world. I believe I told you that there were some things that had given me a great notion for chemistry. But now I've got an idea that I can't get rid of, that I played the shirk in leaving home. They need me there; that is, if I should do my part as I ought, and not shirk. Instead of whining because things went wrong I ought to have faced the music and made them better. If I had even gone fishing to any purpose, and not let Robin take passengers out in the *Mary Ann*—' "

"Poor Ken! he needn't mind that," said Robin.

"There's nothing like a little homesickness to bring a fellow onto his marrow-bones!" said Duke. "The first time I went away to school I found





KEN'S LETTER.







out what a cub I had been at home, I can tell you!"

"“I shall write to Robin,” the letter went on, “and ask her if she thinks I ought to come home, not to dawdle and shirk, but to put in my best licks. She’s the one who will understand.””

“That is what I wanted you to hear,” said Duke, folding his letter up, although Robin cast a wistful glance at the other page. “I thought, of course, you knew your own family affairs, and I’m afraid it seems like impertinence for me to say anything, but I do think it would be such a pity for Ken to come back.”

“Oh, a great pity,” said Robin, mechanically. She was trying to think how much Ken could mean by proposing to come back. Would he “face the music” so far as to confess everything? She was the one who would understand, he had said, and that sounded, she thought, as if he did mean to confess.

“He’s the kind of a fellow, to be sure, to have an awful lot of persistency about anything that he takes to, and there really isn’t anything here for him to do. I think he would get dull and discontented again, no matter how brave he might be,” continued Duke.

“He really ought not to come, ought he?” said Robin, eagerly. She had wished that he might be brave enough to undo the wrong; she had even tried to pray that he might, and now, suddenly, she felt that she could not endure it. For him to suffer such disgrace—Ken, who was so proud! And his father and mother could never bear it. Let Carlsen threaten and try to frighten her; there was nothing that he could prove—nothing.



"I shall certainly tell him to stay," said Robin. But she looked so pale and excited that Duke was startled.

"You mustn't let this trouble you. I thought you would like to know that Ken was so—so plucky," he said. "It really does a fellow good to get out of the way of being coddled, and to have to obey orders. And if I could do anything—if you would look upon me as a brother in Ken's place, while he is gone, I should be awfully glad. I'm not a bit bad at being a brother, if I am lame. I'm so used to it. You can ask Peggy and Kitty."

"You're very good, but I shall do very well. I don't need any help," said Robin, in a stiff little voice. It was stiff because she was afraid of its breaking, but Duke, who didn't know that, thought she resented what might seem like interference on his part, and mournfully called himself a donkey.

Robin went and played tennis, and danced with the gayest.

"She is just getting over Ken's going," said Jean to sympathetic Kitty Rawlins. "She's had a face a yard long."

Julia Hallett, with a fringe of little bobbing curls ruthlessly shorn from Miss Ferris's devoted head, penned Robin into a corner to make her "solemnly swear" that she didn't "look a fright." Miss Ferris hung about the background, trying to do what was expected of her in keeping out of the way, with her meek little face aglow with pleasure at her self-sacrifice.

"It's a success, isn't it?" said Julia, being reassured in the matter of bangs. "All but Peggy Rawlins."



She's too grown-up, and she wants to be useful. She wanted to pour chocolate—think of it!—as if it were an afternoon tea. I told her we didn't do things in any such small way. She said, 'Oh, I thought it was just a boy and girl party!' I think it was rude, though Martha says she didn't mean to be. Now she's devoting herself to those shy, countrified little Farrar girls. See! if she isn't making Josh Gifford dance with her! The last time he came here to a party he hid under the attic stairs, and we had to drag him out to supper."

Jean went to sleep in the carriage in which Mr. Hallett sent them home, but Robin said to herself all the way home, and half through the night, until in spite of herself she fell asleep, "I will tell Ken not to come home."

She waited anxiously for Ken's letter, which was not very satisfactory when it came. For Ken did not unburden his mind so freely to her as he had done to Duke Rawlins. It was because Duke did not know everything, as she did, Robin said to herself. But he did say that he thought sometimes that he ought to come home and bear his share of the family burdens, and asked her opinion about the matter. He admitted that he had been "as savage as a catamount" before he went away, but he had had much to trouble him. He had already learned that there was no room for shirks in the world, and if he did come home the mate of the *Mary Ann* should never again be obliged to be captain and mate too.

The paper which Prim had found, and which she had sent him, had proved to be of no value; an expert at handwriting had been able to make out a few



words. As a last resort he had sent it to the apothecary at Kingstown—the apothecary who had laughed at him—but without much hope. At all events, there were some things which the apothecary would not know, unless he could remember the things which Dave had asked for in vain. "I said lots of hateful things to you about that paper, Robin, but it was such a disappointment to lose that chance of a fortune! I can't trust myself to think of it, even now." Then followed anxious questions about Dave's condition, which showed that he had not abandoned all hope of the fortune which was to be made by Freneau's discovery. "I've learned the value of money as well as ever a boy knew it, I'll warrant!" he wrote. "It drags you into the mire to be without it."

"That isn't true!" cried Robin, hotly, as she read. "Nothing can drag you into the mire but yourself. And I shall tell him so when I write."

But, after all, she did nothing of the kind. Her letter was constrained, as letters are apt to be when one cannot speak of the thing that lies nearest one's heart. How could she say anything about repentance to Ken, since it was of no avail without restitution? How reproach him for the wrong which she had helped him to conceal? "We are doing very well, and there is no need of you at home," she wrote.

She worked and saved with fierce energy; that was to pay for the watch. She patched her old boating-dress anew, and went down to the Quansett wharf to look for passengers. She went fishing with Cap'n Saul, did a boy's work, and had her share of the catch, which Saul and Thanny sold for her. They eyed her askance, noticing how grasping she had become.



"There's more amiss up there than we know of," Cap'n Saul had said, one night, smoking his after-supper pipe. "You might jest as well scant our share a little when you're dividin', Thanny. She ain't nothin' but a gal."

Good, stingy Cap'n Saul! he had had a struggle with himself, which only Thanny knew of, before he said that.

Being so busily occupied Robin went but seldom to Sandford, refusing most of the invitations of the Hallett and Rawlins girls, who were having a merry summer with picnics, and sailing, and tennis-parties. She had seen Carlsen only twice, and he had given her a quizzical little smile as he bowed. He had been obliged to give up his experiments upon Dave, because the doctor had forbidden them. Dave had been feverish and ill for a week as a result of his glass-making at the works, and the doctor had been decided in his condemnation of any attempt at forcing his memory. His mind must be amused and only gently stimulated, he said; and Adam was lent to him, at Jean's suggestion that he was well adapted to this work. Adam made things lively in the little house on the edge of the marsh. Dave's shouts of laughter could be heard far and wide, and even Robin was cheered, almost in spite of herself, when she went there, by his pranks. What Adam had needed to develop his talents was a playfellow, and he had found one in Dave. Annette worked cheerfully at anything she could find to do to keep the wolf from the door, and declared that her Dave was becoming himself once more, although no one else could see any change.

The Rawlinses came often to the bluffs on their



walks and drives, in spite of Robin's unsocial ways; but Duke never said anything more about Ken, and this was a relief, after all, although Robin knew that the correspondence between them was much more brisk than that which Ken kept up with his own family.

And with all Robin's efforts, the money to pay for the watch—the conscience money—was gathered so slowly! But the summer had drifted away, and the summer sun had made the cranberries plump and rosy, and the promise of a great crop was still held out. The meadow was a mile from the bluffs, down below Honeypot Marsh, but Robin was never weary of trudging over the road; the cranberries meant so much: she could pay for the watch; she might even send something to Jo Wilkes's mother. The lightening of her father's anxieties, the home comforts they would bring, were scarcely thought of now.

Robin was going to pick, herself, and Jean as well, if her high courage held out, and Robin had already engaged the Blodgett children; Annette, for as much of the time as she could leave Dave; Thanny, who declared that he wouldn't leave the cranberries even to catch a whale; Joey Fickett, of clove-lozenge memory; and, in fact, a host of Quansett boys and girls, who were all her friends, to say nothing of Julia Hallett and Kitty Rawlins, who were going to pick for fun.

Only one danger now seemed to threaten the cranberries, and that was frost; it was desirable to leave them on the vines as long as possible, but now, in late September, the nights were very cool. Some night might come a killing frost. There were flood-



gates on the edge of the meadow, by means of which it could be flooded, and the cranberries protected from their enemy; and Thanny, as well as Robin, kept watch and ward.

But one day they had gone for some deep-sea fishing away out beyond the Chunks, and a keen wind blew up which filled Thanny with alarm.

"So long as it's windy, Thanny, there's no danger," said Robin, for it was always stealthily, in the still, cold nights, that the deadly frost came upon the cranberries.

"The wind is going down with the sun, and then it's going to be *cold*," said Thanny, sagely.

"Old Prob didn't say so," said Robin, who was constantly in the counsels of the Weather Bureau.

"Mebbe he wa'n't born on the Cape," suggested Thanny. "He don't always know. If them low-layin' black clouds don't mean cold—"

"Wind, more likely," said Cap'n Saul, surveying them with a practised eye. "We can fish until dark, and then have a breeze that 'll take us home kitin'."

The Hallett girls were on board, and Peggy and Duke Rawlins. Cap'n Saul had promised them some "tall fishin'," and they were pulling in some very large fish. It had been warm in the morning, warm and misty, with so little wind that the *Flying Scud* had been a long time in reaching the fishing-ground. Now Cap'n Saul was in no hurry to leave, both out of consideration for the catch and for his guests. It was his opinion that both Robin and Thanny were unreasonably, childishly anxious about the cranberries.



Thanny kept his eye on the clouds, and had but slight regard even for the forty-pounder which he had caught.

The wind died away at sunset; it fell suddenly, and Cap'n Saul immediately bestirred himself. The *Flying Scud* was too heavy a boat to row; to be becalmed would mean to stay out all night. That had often happened to the *Scud* when Cap'n Saul and Thanny were alone in her; but with the passengers he had to-day it was a more serious matter. Thanny was about to betake himself to the tender, but his brother interposed.

"It is too far to row, Thanny, and you won't make anything. There's a cloud out there that's a-going to bring us a capful of wind anyhow."

But the capful of wind didn't come. The dark cloud wandered off, out to sea apparently, and the stars began to shine out of a clear, quiet sky; the air grew stiller, and there was scarcely a ripple on the water. "I declare, if ever I *was* so beat by the weather!" exclaimed Cap'n Saul. "I don't know as ever I see wind give out jest like that."

The Hallett girls, who had acquired quite a reputation for whistling up a breeze, whistled all in vain; and Julia stuck pins into the sail until no one had another pin to spare. After two hours, in which the *Scud's* motion was scarcely perceptible, Thanny took resolutely to the tender.

"If anybody wants to go 'long of me, I'm goin' to get there!" he announced.

"I want to go, but it would make the boat heavier, and delay you," said Robin. "Oh, Thanny! But I know you will do all you can."



"You won't see land before daylight; the *Scud* will be in ahead of you!" called Cap'n Saul.

But Thanny set his teeth tightly together, and took up his oars. "Exercise ain't bad for a feller to-night, for it is cold, and no mistake," he said.

Robin crouched in the stern, a heap of misery; the cranberries were lost, and with them all her hopes.

The dim gray dawn lighted Thanny as he landed at Gridiron Cove, the nearest point to the cranberry meadow. A heavy white frost covered all the fields. Cramped and full of pains was Thanny, and nearly worn out; but he carried his heavy heart bravely through bog and brier to the meadow. No white frost here, but glistening water over all the vines! And yet the gates seemed scarcely raised at all. He hurried over to them. A figure rose from the ground, a wet and draggled figure. From the shawl thrown over her head Annette Freneau's anxious face looked out at him.

"I could not lift the gates enough, and it was too late to get any one, so I have not dare to go away. Is it that the cranberries are safe?"

"You've been here all night?" gasped Thanny. He extended one of his little, hard, brown paws. "I say, shake, will you? You—you—you're consid'able of a girl!"



## CHAPTER XIV

THE cranberry-picking began the next day. Willing hands made light work, and the harvesting was soon accomplished. Prices went down, vexatiously, but Robin "held on," according to Cap'n Saul's counsel, and up they came again, according to Cap'n Saul's prediction. It was very queer and delightful to be such a business woman. And such a pocketful of money to be all one's own! It was enough to turn any fifteen-year-old head. How very happy she should be, thought Robin, if only she had not upon her mind the memory of that dreadful wrong done to Jo Wilkes. And now that she had at last obtained the money to pay for the watch—all her pitiful little savings had been as nothing towards it—an unforeseen difficulty had arisen. How could she convey the money to Martha Hallett without leading her to suspect Ken? Sandford was a little town, where it was difficult even to drop a letter into the post-office unperceived; and there would be an effort made to trace a letter which contained a hundred and twenty-five dollars. (Robin had learned the price of the watch from Julia by dint of many suggestive remarks.) The Halletts would talk of it everywhere; it would cause a nine days' wonder; and just now, when it was known that she had received money for her cranberries, would not suspicion be likely to fall



upon Ken? And there was Carlsen, who already suspected, who perhaps had only refrained from making his suspicions known because his trouble at the works, with the growing dissatisfaction of the men, absorbed all his thoughts.

No, it would never do. She must carry that burden at least for a while longer, unless Ken should now be willing to confess. It would be easier now that the watch could be paid for. He had said that he should save and save, and never have any peace until it was paid for; but with the wages of a boy, barely enough at the best for him to exist upon, how long it would be before he had saved enough! He never hinted at the matter in his brief letters; but then it was understood that all the household should read Ken's letters, and that fact was sufficient to account for his reticence. But now he had been promised a vacation of a few days, and he was coming home. She wished him to confess now, for the burden had become intolerable; it had spoiled all the pleasure of the summer—the freshness of the mornings and the smell of the salt spray; even the cranberry money, although that had bought soft shoes and new petticoats for Moira, and for all in the house the things they liked best. If only Ken would confess! Perhaps it could be managed, the watch paid for, and Jo Wilkes's reputation cleared, without much publicity, without having the matter come to her father's ears.

She had grown pale and thin; people wondered at her altered looks; her father thought them the result of hard work, and insisted upon her going to picnics and sailing-parties. She gave up her class



in the little mission-school at Quansett, every one thought, because she was ill; but Robin said to herself that it was because she could no longer endure to be a hypocrite. She left the day after the lesson had been from the text, "The way of the transgressor is hard." How she had explained that text to her class!—the mites who scarcely understood what it all meant, but looked at her with wondering eyes.

"It was remarkable to hear her warn those children against wrong-doing—that girl, hardly more than a child herself," said the lady who taught an adjoining class, a belated summer visitor.

"It was because I *knew*," said Robin to herself, overhearing the remark.

And, after all, Ken did not come. The boy's vacation was the last consideration in a large establishment, and he could not easily be spared.

"But I don't complain, Robin," he wrote, "for they trust me more and more every day; and it's the most fascinating business in the world. I've almost forgotten why I wanted to learn it at first in my interest in the business itself. I wonder if old Freneau really had found out anything new about coloring glass? I've read up all the methods, and I understand about all the materials used, but it seems to me that everything must be already known that he could have found out. I sent that paper to the Kingstown apothecary, but he couldn't make anything of it. It was just like a fellow who didn't know much to go crazy over it, as I did then. And yet I can't help thinking what if there should be anything in it? I am digging at Latin like a beaver; what do you think of that, old girl? I have a use for it now.



I've seen the value of it; that's worth all the preaching in the world to a dull fellow like me. But if I only had listened to the pater, what a start I should have had!"

It was a light-hearted letter throughout, in spite of the disappointment about his vacation. How manly and steadfast of purpose he had become—for Ken! How good a thing for him had been this going away from home! But how strange that he should have succeeded so well with so terribly false a start! And they "trusted him more and more!"

Mr. Eames, Duke's tutor, who had secured the place for him, had told her what good reports he had heard from Ken—that not one boy in fifty would have done as well, and that he was likely to work himself into a fine position in time.

And only she knew of what Ken was capable, what Ken had done—she, and perhaps Carlsen, who might be only biding his time. Sometimes the secret was so heavy a burden that she was tempted to confide it to Duke Rawlins—Duke, whose friendship for Ken might be strong enough to stand even that test. But then it would become Duke's duty to tell, to clear Jo Wilkes, just as it was her duty, and Duke would never let such a wrong go unrighted.

The troubles in the works were increasing.

"I've told father what was coming. I've told him all summer," said Duke, in his thin, high-keyed voice, as he lingered one morning on his pony at the foot of the terrace steps. "I've told him that the union wouldn't put up with that fellow Carlsen's high-handed, arbitrary behavior, turning off a good workman at a moment's notice, and replacing him with a foreigner,



just to show his authority. Of course, he would have some story of the man's incompetency to tell the firm. Oh, if ever I get over being a boy!" Duke's fair face flushed with eagerness. "I wouldn't mind being lame, not even the pain, though that is pretty bad sometimes, if only there were not so many things to be done; and sometimes I can see how, and no one will believe in me, because I'm only a boy."

"But I think it's awfully mean that they won't hire foreigners," said Jean, who always had the courage of her convictions. "That was why poor old Freneau had a hard time; both the men and the managers were down on him."

"But glass-making isn't like anything else," said Duke. "They've always guarded the secrets religiously, and there has always been great jealousy between different countries. You ought to read all about it; it's like a story. Mr. Eames asked me the other day whether I would like to be a great preacher or a great statesman, and I gave him what he called an Irish answer; I said, a great glass manufacturer. But, oh dear! it seems to me that I shall be a boy forever."

A boy forever! Robin remembered that on another day, when it seemed like a prophecy.

"To make perfect glass, you know; no slighting, no cheapening; and after getting a fair interest on money, share and share alike! They laugh at that, and call me a boy; but why isn't it practical, I should like to know? And that's what I call being a *great* glass manufacturer. I should have to manage that foreign business in some way." Duke wrinkled his brows slightly. "It *was* hard on old Freneau. I



wonder why Carlsen took such an interest in that boy? I don't think it can be true, as they say, that he knows anything of any importance. Carlsen has his hands full now, without trying to discover any inventions." Duke spoke with a bitterness of which one would not have believed him capable. "You see, it was different in the other factory; there's nothing like a Cape man for standing up for his rights! There'll be a strike, and they'll *have* to take foreigners. Carlsen talks about importing Bohemians."

"I don't see why they haven't a right to," said Jean, sturdily.

"That would be all very well if the men hadn't been crowded. *I* think they were," said Duke.

"Will there be fights?" asked Jean, breathlessly.

"You'll see what there'll be soon enough," said Duke, as he rode away.

"He's a very queer boy," said Jean, reflectively. "You'd think he was a hundred, but he will play tiddledywinks. He is sort of like a lame boy in a story, being so good to people, and playing the violin for us to dance one night until he nearly fainted, and wouldn't own he was tired; but they say he has an orfe temper, and one day he called Carlsen a brute and a villain."

"I'm glad he did—I'm glad he did!" cried Robin.

"Well, if you haven't a lot of old Adam, as Prim says of Traddles! When you didn't know either that it was because Carlsen made Dicky Lawson work until he fainted, after he had burned his wrist to the bone!"

"I'm glad, anyway," said Robin, and attempted no defence.



"I used to be afraid that Robin would get to be a saint, but now I don't think she ever will," said Jean to herself, comfortably.

The very next day came the news of the strike. Thanny, who was in a state of great excitement, came up to the bluffs to tell about it.

"It's in the new department, where Carlsen is boss, that the trouble is. The workmen have struck, every man jack of 'em! They're actin' orfle, too, though the union has posted notices sayin' how they'd ought to behave well. There's a lot of drinkin' and fightin', and there ain't goin' to be no school over there to-morrer. Them Sandford fellers always do have all the luck."

"Aren't you ashamed, Thanny Baker, to wish to have such dreadful things happen here?" This was Jean. Robin scarcely ever reproved any now nowadays.

"Nothin' never happens to hender school's keepin' over here. A feller's got *some* feelin's," said Thanny, resentfully.

"Are they going to hire a new set of workmen, Thanny?" asked Robin.

"Some say they be, some say they darsn't," said Thanny. "Mr. Rawlins had to go off to New York yesterday, and Mr. Hallett don't have anything to do with the flint-glass department. Carlsen he's havin' things all his own way. Some say Hallett is so worried it's made him sick; he ain't showin' himself outdoors, anyhow. Some say there's a whole gang of men comin' down on the train Saturday, ready to begin work Monday morning; they're Germans or something. No school Saturday!" Thanny expressed his



gratification by a double somerset on the grass below the back piazza steps, where Robin and Jean were sitting.

"I don't see how you can enjoy it, Thanny," said Robin, making a feeble attempt at rebuke. "The men will have no money, and their wives and children will suffer."

"Union takes care of 'em, so much a week," said practical Thanny. "And they hain't no business to strike; Saul says so. They'd ought to be thankful to get stiddy days' works."

The opposing views of the matter presented by Cap'n Saul and Duke Rawlins were somewhat perplexing.

"I wouldn't think nothin' about it if I was you; girls can't understand," said Thanny, with masculine superiority, when Robin said this. "I'm goin' over, Saturday, and I'll come and tell you about it," he added, consolingly.

But the lights were all out in the house on the bluffs when Thanny came home Saturday night. Cap'n Saul had gone over, also, forsaking his work. Peaceful Sandford had known no such excitement for years. Thanny fell asleep in Sunday-school the next day, being unaccustomed to late hours and excitement, and sprang up shouting out dreadful threats against the new workmen, to the great diversion of the other scholars. For Thanny's sympathies had veered round, and he now took sides with the old workmen against the foreign invasion. Saul might think as he liked, but he, Thanny, was a true son of the Cape, and wasn't going to countenance foreigners.

A hostile crowd had met the invaders at the sta-



tion, but there was a large force to preserve order, and beyond threats and the throwing of a few missiles there was no violence. Placards were posted all over the town, counselling the strikers to be sober and prudent.

"When they try to go to work Monday morning, then there'll be fun," announced Thanny, sorely aggrieved that he must go to school.

As soon as school was done that afternoon, Thanny made a short-cut through meadow, bog, and woods to Sandford, but at twilight he reappeared at the bluffs breathless. He stopped only to put his head in at the kitchen door.

"Say, Moira, tell 'em Dave Freneau has got lost in the marsh. The monkey ran away, and he went after him. I expect there ain't any need of bein' so scairt as Annette is; she's that kind of a girl; and yet she ain't *all* cry-baby neither." (It was evident that Thanny was recalling the night when Annette had so bravely guarded the cranberries.) "There's three or four men searchin' for him, but there ain't anybody that knows the marsh like Saul."

Robin had heard, and came flying out.

"Run, Thanny; don't stop a minute! That bog is so treacherous. And, oh, poor Dave! I'm afraid he won't know enough to keep out of it. How long has he been there, Thanny?"

"Since last night. I always said that there wa'n't any profit in that monkey," called Thanny, as he darted off.

"Annette must be almost wild, and she has no one. I must go down there," said Robin.

Moira called upon the saints to witness that her





“ ‘SAY, MOIRA, TELL ‘EM DAVE FRENEAU HAS GOT LOST IN THE MARSHL’ ”







back was "broke," but she would not let Robin go alone, much less with Cap'n Saul and Thanny.

"The company ye kapes on the salt say, that God is afther makin', don't be fitt'n at all at all on dhry land," said Moira; but what she meant, if she knew herself, Robin could not stop to find out. Nothing would do but Jean must go too, and Prim undertook the gratifying responsibility of putting herself and the others to bed, having no misgivings except from the fact that Traddles persistently and frivolously winked while she said her prayers.

Cap'n Saul had gone to Quansett to a meeting of the Law and Order League, which had been called on account of the disturbed state of the community, a large part of the youthful element of Quansett being in sympathy with the strikers, and disposed to active measures. Thanny had an opportunity to send a message to Saul by Steve Prettygo, who was on his way to the meeting, and came breathlessly running after the party from the bluffs before they were half-way to the Freneau cottage.

Thanny had done his duty in the matter of the missing boy, but his mind was still chiefly occupied with the strike. Thanny had a cheerful appetite for "something going on," and he did not realize the amount of trouble and suffering involved.

"That Carlsen feller kept the upper hands to-day, I tell you! He thinks he's some to-night," said Thanny, excitedly. "But I shouldn't want to have to have so many officers to keep order in *my* glass-works! He telegraphed for Mr. Rawlins to come home, anyhow; that shows he's some scairt, don't it? And I tell you he'd better be, for some of them are desp'rate fellers.



Some folks says that their keepin' so quiet to-day means that they're up to some underhanded tricks. I hope Sandford folks are goin' to sleep sound in their beds to-night; but—but I know what I've heard!"

"If you know of anything they're going to do, Thanny, you ought to go right straight and tell the authorities," said Jean, with decision.

"If I know anything! It's likely that them fellers would tell their affairs to me! Why, they think I'm only a small shaver!" said Thanny, but with an accent which expressed contempt for such an opinion.

"Thanny, was Dave Freneau really out all night? I'm afraid it will kill him. I wonder Annette didn't let us know," said Robin.

"She didn't let anybody know till this morning. Gib Atkins, goin' to work, came acrost her on the edge of the marsh; she'd been wand'rin' all night, and she acted as if she was half crazy. 'It was a wonder she hadn't got into the bog,' Gib said."

"Ould Jack-o'-lantern, the rashkill, was afther leadin' her astray! Sure it was great foolichtness to live there where he do be always flittin' about, and it's me own two eyes have seen him," said Moira, with deep feeling.

By this time they had reached the Freneau cottage, which was full of lights and voices. The wives and daughters of the men who were searching the marsh had come to bear Annette company. They had succeeded in calming her, or else grief and anxiety had worn her out. She sat in a corner, her face white and listless, and only her great black eyes seemed alive. She sprang up, however, at sight of Thanny.



"Where is he? Have you bring him—your brother, that know all the marsh? All the way through the woods to Deepmouth they say he know. But my Dave have not gone so far; he have not the strength; the mire have drag him down and swallow him up!" She said it quietly, without a tear—Annette, whose tears were so ready on all occasions. "He have not come? Well, it will be too late when he do!"

Robin and Jean tried their best to cheer her.

"Adam is so intelligent, he would find the way back if—if anything had happened to Dave," said Robin.

"Dave and the monkey are friends; where is one, there will be the other," said Annette.

The minutes dragged by heavily; the little wooden clock, with the picture upon it of a red-cheeked lady and a yellow rose, droned them out grudgingly, while they listened for footsteps—Saul's on the highway, or the men from the marsh, who might be bringing something. The women and girls began to take themselves away. They were not unsympathetic, but they were the wives and daughters of workmen in the glass factory, and their minds were full of the strike and their own cares and troubles, the men were searching in the swamp, and they must look after their households.

"Go? How can you think of such a thing, Moira?" said Robin, severely, in answer to an anxious muttering from Moira. "Papa knows; he will not worry."

It seemed an age before Saul came; he had a lantern, and he went down into the marsh with but few questions. Thanny had gone on to Sandford, against Robin's earnest advice. He said, "As long as there



wasn't anything that he could do, he might as well find out what was goin' on."

The October night was chilly, but the little wood fire on the hearth died out, and no one thought of replenishing it.

"If one could only do something! If I could go down into the marsh and search!" cried Robin, as the silence and suspense became unendurable.

Jean thought longingly of the peaceful nursery at home, with the children drowsily saying their prayers and Banquo cheerfully washing his face upon the hearth.

Robin threw open the door upon the back porch, and looked inquiringly at Annette. She wished that she would propose to go into the marsh. Anything was better than this endless waiting.

"She do be spint," said Moira, arousing herself to sympathy, in spite of her expectation of being carried away bodily by "ould Jack."

"Look! look!" cried Robin. "The sky is all ablaze! The works—Sandford—the woods are all on fire!"



## CHAPTER XV

THE sky was indeed all ablaze, and the clang of fire-bells came to their ears as they hurried out, Annette aroused from her apathy, and Moira trembling in every limb, and crying out that it was "the end of the worruld."

"The woods are all on fire, and my Dave is there!" cried Annette, rushing out. Robin held her back.

"The fire has not reached the marsh yet, Annette, and the bog is so wet I don't think it can get there," she said. "And just hear the bells! they are calling engines from everywhere; they will put it out."

"Who say my Dave is in the marsh? I have go all over it, every inch, over and over I have go, and he is not there; he is in the deep woods. He will be burned to death!" cried Annette, almost beside herself. But she did not try again to go down into the swamp. Poor Annette! her night of wandering and the long strain of suspense had worn her out utterly. She dropped down upon the door-step and crouched there, her head covered with her shawl. Old Moira sat down too, and rocked to and fro, raising a banshee wail. One of the men who had been searching for Dave came running through the yard on his way home. All the other men had gone home. Their wives and children and everything they had in the



world might be in danger. They must help to extinguish the fire; that was their first duty, the man said.

Meanwhile the air was full of the clanging of fire-bells; the wind brought the sound from distant towns, and echoes came up from the marsh. The smoke was rolling towards them in dense waves.

"The fire is reaching the marsh, Jean. We must do something, or I shall go crazy!" whispered Robin.

"Every one has forgotten us," whimpered Jean—"Dave and us too! This house will be on fire soon!"

In fact, Jean was having occasion to doubt the wisdom of wishing to go everywhere that any one went. She wondered if even Thanny wouldn't find to-night that there was too much "going on." If one could help poor Dave, or be any comfort to Annette, it would be different; but to sit there waiting while the fire came nearer and nearer was too much to endure. But even while Jean made her wail there was a beating of horses' hoofs on the road. In the blaze, which made everything as clear as day, they could distinguish Duke Rawlins's white pony.

"Is it true that Dave Freneau is lost—is down in the marsh?" he shouted. "My father heard of it from Carlsen. He has sent Nick Piper and Collins down there."

Nick Piper was a sportsman who knew all the marshes and woods in the vicinity.

"Cap'n Saul is there," said Robin, "but it is a large place, and there are the woods; no one knows how far he may have wandered."

"Adam will always lead you a dance," explained Jean.



"Will the fire reach—reach the marsh?" asked Robin, in a voice that shook.

"God knows," said Duke, reverently. "There is the bog between, but we have had dry weather, and the wind carries the sparks. It's an awful night's work, whoever is responsible for it."

"Is Sandford all on fire?" asked Jean.

"The fire was set in the works, at the furnace end of the new building. They may try to say that it was a defective furnace, but every one will know that the responsibility lies at the door of the strikers, or of those who drove them to strike. There are two opinions about that; of course, a boy's isn't of any account. Fortunately, the wind carried the flames towards the woods, so they will save the town. Half a dozen houses near the works have burned, and as many more have been half ruined by water. Of course there's a panic, and people are pitching their goods recklessly into the street. I saw Thanny Baker staggering under a load of pew-cushions from the church half a mile away from the fire."

"It's like Thanny to help, anyway," said Jean, stoutly defending her absent friend. "And I can't help thinking that Cap'n Saul will find Dave. The Bakers are so *dependable*!"

Duke shook his head doubtfully. "So much depends upon chance or Providence, in a search like that," he said.

"If we could only go! It is terrible to wait here," said Robin. "And to think that he may have been overlooked not far away, or that the fire may be creeping upon him!"

"Sure it's crapin' upon oursilves, Miss Robin,



darlint, and of what use for an ould woman and childer to bide here?" said Moira, piteously. Moira was on her knees uttering pious ejaculations, when she was not calling upon every one to witness that she had always known "the thricks iv ould Jack."

"You may go home if you like, Moira, you and Jean; perhaps you would better. The fire may make papa alarmed about us," said Robin. "*I couldn't go.*"

But Moira steadfastly refused to desert Robin. "Sure it do be but a thrifle to have *I* roasted," she said, with somewhat bitter resignation.

Jean, who was in nowise resigned to being "roasted," stood looking over her shoulder at the great rolling clouds of smoke, all ready for flight.

"*I must go down there!*" said Duke, desperately. "A fellow can't always be thinking that one of his legs is shorter than the other, when he might save a fellow's life. But you—you're a girl."

"I sha'n't be in your way. I'm not—not just like other girls; I'm used to rough things," said Robin, eagerly.

"Sure hersilf is a lady born and raired," muttered Moira, indignantly, "barrin' oursilves is come to the quarest place, wid nothing at all but sand and a dale iv fish, and wan as good as anither."

"You *are* the mate of the *Mary Ann*, you're not an ordinary girl," said Duke, ignoring Moira's mutterings. "The smoke may drive us back, but we'll try it."

"Oh, musha, musha, that iver we seen the Cape!" wailed Moira. "And Miss Robin wid her sinses gone intoirely; and it's niver in a sand-hape that I thought to lay me ould bones!"



"If you don't keep still, I'll go down into the marsh, too!" said Jean, whose temper was tottering by reason of sleepiness and the strain on her nerves.

And Moira kept silence for a few minutes, watching Robin and Duke as their figures, standing out clearly now, and now obscured as the firelight was hidden by smoke, were making their way down into the underbrush.

"Is it bit things loike ye that 'll foind the b'y, whin the hunthers can't?" she called after them, scornfully. "The monkey is that wise ye'd think he'd bring home the foolicht b'y. Thim foreigners! Our-silves is kilt wid 'em!"

There was no fear of Annette's temper now; she seemed entirely oblivious of Moira's complaints.

"Jist to think of hersilf go'n down there in the night her lone, but for the lame b'y, and the loikes iv me sittin' here; but, the saints presarve us! me ould legs do be spint intoirely!"

Robin and Duke made their way with but little more difficulty than if it were daylight, until they were in the depths of the marsh. The heat of the fire was oppressive, and now and then a great cloud of smoke darkened the sky and made breathing difficult.

"He can't be here in the marsh; there is less tangle of underbrush than I thought. He would certainly have been found," said Duke, stopping short suddenly.

"Adam has a great fondness for tall trees," said Robin. "As long as one followed and tried to catch him he would go on. We used to turn back, and then he would follow us. But perhaps Dave didn't know that."



They had come to the edge of the bog, the "honey-pot," which intervened between the marsh and the great stretch of woodland which extended for many miles down the Cape, fringing its sandy shore.

"Could he have crossed this bog?" said Duke, in perplexity.

"Yes, on the old road, around the edge. We drive over it sometimes," said Robin.

Duke looked at her and hesitated. A great cloud of smoke suddenly enveloped them in darkness.

"Oh, can't we go? It will flame up again as light as day," said Robin.

There was a great burst of flame even before the words were spoken, but it showed them such a curious sight that even the object of their search was for a moment forgotten. The bog was full of small rushing shapes; whirring wings struck Robin almost in the face.

"The wild creatures from the woods!" exclaimed Duke. "I have heard that they came out like that when there was a forest fire, but I never thought it could be such a sight as that! Look! look! there's a deer!"

Robin saw a wild rushing thing—like wind made into a shape, she afterwards explained to Jean—a beautiful, antlered head.

"I didn't really believe that there were still deer in those Deepmouth Woods, although I had heard people say so. That fellow must have come a long way. I'm afraid it's a sign that the fire is spreading down towards Deepmouth, though they started to fight it in that direction at the first alarm. How



queer to have a fire warden and to pay so much an hour for fighting fire!"

"Thanny is in that business by this time," said Robin, sagely.

"And half the strikers, if I know them," said Duke. "When once the instinct of thrift gets the upperhand, all is safe. They'll forget that they wanted to shoot the foreign workmen and hang Carlsen in their zeal to save the forests and get the fire money. They were only a few scamps who set the fire, you know."

"See, the wood is full of the animals! It is like the opening of Noah's Ark," said Robin. "Those were rabbits that scampered almost under my feet. And that was a creature whose tail was the most of him—it must have been a fox. And—oh, it's growing dark again!" Robin hung back a little. The darkness, with the scurrying shapes all around, was trying to one's nerves.

"The creatures are harmless; they're terror-stricken, poor things; all they want is to get out of the way. And the fire will flame up again—only too soon. But it seems to me that the bog may stop it, it is very wet. This that you call a road is wet, and the wind is not blowing so hard."

"We didn't see any of these wild things in the marsh," said Robin, jumping quickly aside as another creature, "whose tail was the most of him," rushed by. One might be the mate of the *Mary Ann* and a strong-minded house-keeper, and all that, without liking to have rabbits and foxes and all sorts of creatures, perhaps even wild-cats, scurrying by one in semi-darkness!



"They'll keep in the open; you won't catch any of them near anything that is like woods to-night," said Duke, wisely. "If the animals in the marsh haven't taken the alarm, they will soon."

"Hark! what a queer noise that one is making, and the others are so still," said Robin.

They were about midway along the old honey-pot road, which led to the woods, and the smoke was making a dense darkness about them.

"Listen a moment!" said Robin; for the queer noise had ceased, or been lost in mingling with the other strange noises of the night.

It rose again, a half-plaintive, half-angry little cry, with something like a human tone in it.

"It is—it surely is—a monkey!" cried Robin.

"And there can't be monkeys even in Deepmouth Woods," said Duke.

"If it would only flame up! Of course I don't want the fire to last, but just once!" cried Robin. And then she called Adam, coaxingly, commandingly, threateningly; and from somewhere out of the darkness, with a suddenness which made her scream, onto her shoulder leaped Adam.

"Dave can't be far away. The monkey was fond of him; he wouldn't leave him! Oh, Adam, where is he, where is he!" cried Robin.

But Adam only scolded and chattered, in his utterly unintelligible fashion.

"We must go on a little farther; he may be in the woods, but where we can reach him."

Robin shrank back a little; they could hear the roaring of the fire now like the roaring of the sea, and the air was hot in their faces, but she followed Duke.



The monkey sprang from her shoulder, with what sounded like an angry protest. It was very wet and swampy land into which he darted, but both Duke and Robin plunged after him unhesitatingly. A burst of flame through the smoke-cloud showed them the monkey's queer little lean shape, perched upon the great whitened stump of a tree, which had been blasted by lightning or by the fierce winter winds.

"He's here! Dave is here!" cried Robin. "But, oh, I'm afraid he's dead!"

The boy was lying at the foot of the stump, and his face looked ghastly in the lurid light of the fire.

"He isn't," said Duke, hurriedly feeling his pulse and his heart. "But he will be, and we, too, if we don't get out of this suffocating place!"

"Oh, I'm so thankful! If he had been only a little farther off!" Robin looked with a shudder towards the blazing woods, from which sometimes the fire seemed sweeping upon them with terrible speed.

"But how are we to carry him?" said Duke, in a tone of greatest perplexity.

Robin, looking at him, was startled to see how white his own face was.

"How could I forget! It must have hurt you dreadfully to walk so far—over the rough ground and through the mire," she said.

"It hurts a fellow worst of all to have to cave in—not to be able to do what a girl can!" said Duke. "But that's foolish. I'm afraid I *am* about used up."

He put his hands up to his mouth, after a mysterious boy-fashion, and a whistle rang out that aroused all the echoes.



"If I could get either of those men here, Cap'n Saul, or Nick Piper, or Collins!"

He whistled again and again, but there was no response except from the echoes.

"Couldn't we make a chair?" suggested Robin, placing her hands after the old nursery fashion. "I am strong; you could let him lean to my side. Oh, I am very strong; you don't know what muscles I have from rowing and sailing and house-work and all that!"

"If there were any one to lift him into the chair," said Duke, who had been trying in vain to arouse Dave to consciousness. "We must do something soon. We can't breathe here long."

He whistled again, whistled and shouted with might and main, with no more result than before.

"If the smoke grows any thicker we can't see our way at all," said Robin. "Can't we put our hands under him and lift him so?"

They succeeded in lifting him after several efforts. Dave was not heavy, but his height made him an unwieldy burden. If he had had sufficient consciousness to help himself it would have been comparatively easy, but he was limp and apparently almost lifeless, and the coldness of his hands made Robin shudder.

Adam added his small weight to the burden by perching upon Dave's shoulder, and utterly refusing to be driven away.

They staggered along under their burden until they had almost reached the marsh. It was less difficult to breathe now, and the walking would soon be comparatively easy. Robin's heart had begun to beat



high with hope, when Duke suddenly lurched forward upon his knees, allowing Dave's form to sway over onto him, but not relinquishing his hold of Robin's wrists, by which the "chair" was formed.

"I couldn't do any other way. I knew that I was going, and I tried to save him. It isn't a sprain, you know; my leg just gave out, that's all. How it must hurt you to crouch like that! You'll have to just let him go—softly."

Robin endured the strained position for a moment or two longer, and then was forced to unclasp her hands. She wished that she had done it sooner for Duke's sake, for, relieved of the burden of Dave's weight, he fell forward half fainting.

"I shall be better, all right, you know, in a minute," he gasped. "It hurt, that's all."

Thoroughly frightened, Robin set up a cry that made the woods ring. There was an answering shout, oh, joy! not far away.

"Holler again, so's't I can tell jest where you be! Holler *lively*!" shouted the voice, Cap'n Saul's voice, the most delightful sound, thought Robin, that had ever greeted her ears.

"This way! This way! He's found, found!" she shouted.

Cap'n Saul came floundering straight through the bog, and not far behind him was Collins, Mr. Rawlins's coachman.

"Found! well, I should say you had found a pair on 'em!" exclaimed Cap'n Saul at sight of the motionless figures.

"There's nothing the matter with me," asserted Duke. "Not much—that is, only my leg gave out."



"If it ain't that slim young Rawlins feller! How in the name of common-sense he 'n' a gal come to find what a whole gang of men couldn't beats me! But you see we was all so 'fraid of his gettin' burnt to death that we put straight for the woods. I expect now you come acrost him right here in the marsh. You never fetched him over the old road? Well, 'tain't no wonder that slim little feller's give out."

"I'm not slim, you know; I'm only lame," explained Duke, not without a touch of resentment.

"You ain't slim in your grit anyhow, nor nothin' like it," responded Cap'n Saul, heartily. "I declare if this feller 'ain't got a good strong pulse, though you wouldn't think he was hardly alive," he added, after an anxious examination of Dave. "I should like to know what happened to him. He couldn't have got lost so nigh home, 'pears to me, even if he is kinder lackin'. And the monkey stuck to him! Kinder cur'us, wa'n't it?"

"We might not have found him. We shouldn't have thought of looking in that place if it hadn't been for Adam," said Robin. "And he knew my voice; he wouldn't have come to every one."

"'Twa'n't a mite too soon, neither," said Cap'n Saul. "When I heard that whistle I was just thinkin' that nobody couldn't stay in them woods many minutes more. Piper he cleared out acrost the crick. Well, I always did say monkeys was unprofitable creturs, but—"

Cap'n Saul had gone on, with Dave in his strong arms, and his present opinion of monkeys was lost. Collins carried Duke, and Robin stumbled on behind,



footsore and almost exhausted, but feeling herself in a triumphal procession.

The little waiting group was still waiting, although Jean was almost hysterical and Moira wailing.

"You needn't have been afraid; the fire can't cross that bog," said Cap'n Saul. "But them that's come up out of that old road has had a close call."

Annette seemed almost senseless, but she screamed at sight of Dave. Nothing would persuade her that he was not dead.

After vainly trying to carry Duke home on horseback, the strained position causing him unendurable pain, Collins rode off post-haste in search of the doctor, and of a conveyance for Duke.

It was long before the doctor came, but under Cap'n Saul's skilful manipulations and Moira's untiring heating of bricks and blankets Dave was restored to consciousness.

It was daylight before he opened his eyes, a daylight obscured by a pall of smoke which the sun's rays could scarcely pierce.

"Look out for the bottles, Ken. Don't go to throwing things into the cabin. That's precious stuff, you know," he cried.

"He thinks he is on board the *Scud*—just before he was hurt. He remembers!" cried Robin.



## CHAPTER XVI

"DAVE remembers! He remembers!" cried Robin, joyfully.

"My Dave is himself awaked!" exclaimed Annette, with a radiant face. Her joy was somewhat dampened when he immediately dropped away again, apparently as unconscious as before; but Cap'n Saul assured her that this was the unconsciousness of a deep, refreshing sleep, which would do much towards restoring him to health.

"How is it that he remembers now, and not before?" asked Annette, in perplexity.

"There ain't no accountin' for the freaks of folks' memory when they get a knock on the head," said Cap'n Saul. "I see a feller that had got a knock like that in a Liverpool hospital once; he never knew who he was or where he come from till he had a fever, then he jest come to as nat'ral as life. I expect it's some like the man that jumped into the bramble-bush."

They had discovered that Dave's ankle was badly sprained, and swollen to twice its natural size. Doubtless this accident had befallen him while pursuing the monkey in one of his wild flights; and calling for help being all in vain in that remote place, exposure and pain and exhaustion had at length rendered him insensible. Duke was lying, in greater pain than he



would acknowledge, on the little broken-sprunged lounge, but when Collins came with the carriage, after what seemed an endless delay, he insisted that it should first be used to carry Robin and Jean and Moira home.

Jean alighted at her own door with a stern resolve never to want to go everywhere any more, and Moira loudly expressed her hope that they might "bide peaceful far from foires and sthroikes." They found that the household had slept peacefully, knowing nothing of the fire until morning had shown them the heavy pall of smoke which overhung even the bluffs and the sea.

Robin's father placed his hand upon her head and called her "his brave girl," and after that Robin didn't mind that her mother said that "even when she was Robin's age she had understood the proprieties of life."

Before Robin slept she wrote a letter to Ken. She was almost exhausted, and she found it difficult to write to Ken now; but she wrote "Dave remembers," with an account of his accident and what he had said. Ken must get his vacation now, she thought; he would be too impatient to wait. At noon of that day Thanny appeared, toiling up the hill from the marsh road—a wayworn little pilgrim as black as a chimney-sweep. Jean espied him first and called Robin, and they both ran out to hear his adventures, Robin delaying only to get a cup of coffee, for Thanny was evidently what Moira expressively described as "spint." Moira followed with a great piece of gingerbread, fresh from the oven, which she was obliged to feed to him, as Thanny, though eying



it ravenously, justly maintained that he "hadn't no hands to touch nice victuals with."

"I've fit fire stiddy—eleven hours fire-money!" explained Thanny between his mouthfuls, as he sat upon the grass, surrounded by his devoted friends. "Saul couldn't expect a feller to go to school after that, could he? And 'twas you and Duke Rawlins that found the French boy, wa'n't it? I tell you, there's been kind of lively times, ain't there? And I helped a lot of folks to save their furniture, too. If the wind had blew jest a little mite dif'runt there wouldn't have been nothin' left of Sandford. And I come orful near lickin' a feller, too."

"Oh, Thanny!" said Robin, reproachfully.

"I guess if you knew!" said Thanny, with depths of meaning in his tone. "I wouldn't care if he was a man, if I'd been there and heard him I'd have pitched into him. Would you let anybody say that your friends was thieves, and stole a watch, without pitchin' into him?"

"Who stole a watch? What are you talking about?" said Jean.

As for Robin, she could feel the blood rushing to her temples, and her heart seemed to be beating in her ears.

Thanny fortified himself with a long draught of coffee and a great, deliberate bite of gingerbread, which Jean now held, since Moira had been obliged to return to her work. "Of course nobody cares what that feller says, and he knew he'd get discharged. They held a meetin'—the union folks, the sensible ones, you know—with Mr. Rawlins and Mr. Hallett, right in the room where he was sick. Carl-



sen had heard they was goin' to, and he wa'n't asked to it, and he knew his time was up. That's how he dared to sarse Duke Rawlins like that. I jest wisht I'd been there!"

"Thanny, what do you mean? Carlsen didn't accuse Duke Rawlins of stealing?" demanded Jean, impatiently.

"He met him this mornin' when Collins' was carryin' him home in the carriage, and he called him a little sneakin', white-livered meddler, mixin' with the workmen, and keepin' the lowest comp'ny he could find, and he said—'twouldn't hurt your feelin's none, now, would it, Miss Robin, to be lied about by such a low-lived feller as that?—he said his friends Ken and Robin Dinsmore wa'n't above stealin' a watch and lettin' an innercent feller like Jo Wilkes suffer for it! And he said you had helped Jo Wilkes to get off out of the way, and he was knowin' to it, and he could have had you took up! Now I'll tell you jest what it all means," added sagacious Thanny, after another refreshing pull at the coffee. "It got out somehow that them fellers expected to have the *Mary Ann* that night, and I don' know but what they come up and got her and brought her back again; for jest as sure as I'm a livin' sinner she wa'n't layin' at that slip when I went acrost that night. And that Carlsen hatched up that lie with jest that much to start on!"

"It doesn't matter, anyway. Such a ridiculous story!" said Jean. "Fancy Ken and Robin stealing! Of course no one would listen to it for a moment. I think Duke was foolish to be annoyed. Why, Robin, you look as if you really minded. You're quite white."



"Well, it ain't so very polite, now," said Thanny. "'Tain't real compliment'ry. And lies are always rilin'. He called Duke Rawlins a sight of names, too, and Steve Prettygo, that was listenin', he said Duke was jest as white as a sheet. Collins threatened to run over him if he didn't clear out. He's cleared out now, bag and baggage! He was afraid to wait for the train, for the men was threatenin' to hustle him!"

"Has he really gone?" asked Robin, doubtfully.

"Of course he has; that was part of the 'greement that the union made with Hallett & Rawlins, that he should be discharged, and the men are coming back at the same prices, but with the old hours that they had before Carlsen came—all of 'em, jest as soon as the new works are ready. And they've arrested the men that set the fire. The workmen themselves helped to track 'em, and the foreigners are goin' to be paid for their trouble, and Mr. Rawlins is goin' to find work for 'em in New York. And—and I've got my fire-money. And they put it out down by the crick at four o'clock this mornin', and it never crossed the honey-pot at all. And they're goin' to be built right up in a jiffy, better'n they were before—the works, I mean. And they saved the old buildings, you know. And—and so it's all right, only Duke Rawlins is pretty sick, they say; they had two doctors as soon as he got home."

"I knew he felt awfully when he was lying on that old lounge this morning, though he wouldn't own it," said Jean. "What he went through last night was enough to kill any one as delicate as he! Well, Peggy is likely to have nursing enough to do in her own family!"



"Oh, Jean, don't talk as if Duke were going to die," cried Robin. "Everything seems to be turning out so—so dreadfully."

"I thought everything was turning out very well, except that Duke is ill," said Jean. "The strike seems to be ended, and Dave Freneau is coming to his senses, and the fire didn't do as much damage as was expected, and—it isn't possible that you really care about the silly things that Carlsen said about you and Ken? It isn't as if it were a *probable* story! I should never think of it twice."

"I tell you what, I'm goin' to get at the bottom of that story about the *Mary Ann*. The bottom fac's are what you want, as Saul says. And you see there must be something to it, 'cause where did that boat go to? There ain't many things that I can't find out when I set out to." Thanny wagged his small, begrimed head sagaciously.

"Oh, Thanny," began Robin, but her voice failed. How could she make any reasonable objection to Thanny's exercising his bump of curiosity about the boat? She must be careful not to let even Thanny suspect. And so Thanny trudged away unhindered, with his inner man much refreshed, but his muscles so cramped and stiffened that he walked like a little old man.

Robin went down to Quansett that afternoon; there were some errands at the stores, and, moreover, she felt a feverish desire to know what people were saying about Carlsen and the story he had told. Every one would have heard it, for Steve Prettygo's shop was a rendezvous for gossips. Fortunately Jean, for once, did not wish to go, being thoroughly tired out.



Every one stared at Robin, even the few belated visitors at the hotel; or did she only imagine it? The strike and the fire and the rebuilding of the flint-glass factory were the chief topics of conversation; she heard Carlsen's name mentioned, but it was coupled with very uncomplimentary adjectives. Jean was right; it was a silly story to which no one would listen. And what if Thanny did spread abroad the story that in the night those men who helped Jo Wilkes to escape had carried off the *Mary Ann*? It was a plausible way to account for Carlsen's slander, and the men would never confess their share in the matter for the sake of denying that they stole the *Mary Ann*. The way of the transgressor was hard, but every one would call Carlsen's story foolish and improbable, and talk about it would die away.

"There never was so much smoke without some fire; and, anyhow, the minister had ought to know it."

"Hallett is lookin' into it. He's the one to tell the minister."

Robin heard this as she was going into Mr. Sears's store. There was a sudden hush in the group of men and boys about the door as they saw her. She went by them conscious that her cheeks were blazing. How queerly Mr. Sears looked at her! and she could scarcely command her voice sufficiently to make her errand known.

People believed it! they would tell her father—her father, who was so happy in the good reports that came from Ken, and whose earthly hopes seemed now centred in him. It was Solomon Gross who had said that "Mr. Hallett was looking into it, and he was the one to tell the minister"—Solomon Gross,





“THERE WAS A SUDDEN HUSH IN THE GROUP ABOUT THE DOOR.”







who was sober-minded and not given to light gossip, and had always been a good friend to Ken and her. Mr. Hallett was a straightforward man, with a taste, like Cap'n Saul, for bottom facts. He would be very likely to go to her father with the report. Her father had been more feeble than usual of late, and the doctor had said long ago that he must have nothing to agitate him, or he would not answer for the consequences.

In some way she must hinder the report from reaching her father's ears; but how? It was terrible to tell any one what Ken had done. She might write to Ken and urge him to confess, but that would involve delay; and then Ken was peculiar and obstinate; since he had been capable of doing it, he might be capable of denying it now, when confession would ruin all the prospects which were opening before him. And when they questioned her she could not deny; she had been able to act a lie in seeing Jo Wilkes wrongfully accused, but to the deliberate falsehood, which, perhaps, after all, was not so much worse, she knew herself unequal.

"I am weak—weak!" said poor Robin to herself. "I could neither tell the truth for him, nor a lie!"

If only Duke Rawlins were not too ill, she thought, she could tell him. He was such a good friend; he would find some way to keep the truth from her father's ears. At length she decided to go to Martha Hallett, carrying the money to pay for the watch. Martha was friendly and kind-hearted, she thought, although she was so frivolous. And she was not without shrewdness; she might find a way to satisfy her father's suspicions without betraying Ken. At least



she could persuade him not to tell her father. And to have the watch paid for would make a little difference, it seemed to her, although all were known. She was so weary, physically, that it was impossible to go to Sandford that afternoon, but the next morning, early, she set out with the roll of bills in her pocket—the precious cranberry money, which was to set right, so far as it could, the wrong of which Ken had been guilty.

Both Julia and Martha espied her from afar, and ran to meet her; they had evidently just come from the breakfast-table, for Julia had a napkin in her hand.

"So lovely of you to come over so early!" cried Martha, and Julia echoed the sentiment. "Oh, and I've such a piece of news!" continued Martha. "I'm really going to get rid of her for good! Uncle Ambrose Gifford is really attentive to her! He comes every Tuesday evening, and it's always a sign of something particular to go to see a lady always on the same day of the week—at least for an old bachelor! I asked Miss Ferris if it wasn't, and you should have seen how furiously she blushed! She wouldn't have cut off her locks to piece out *my* burned bangs! And, oh! we're really to go to New York this winter, for a month or two, anyway; and without any governess it will be just the same as if we were out!"

"And the strike?" said Robin, trying feebly to stem the current.

"Oh, it's over; but wasn't it dreadful? We thought we should be burned to death; every one thought they would set this house on fire. And it will be so late before we can go to New York! Papa



will have to see to the new buildings ; he won't trust any one."

"Carlsen is gone," announced Julia, "and every one is glad. And Duke Rawlins is very sick."

"Carlsen wasn't so very bad," said Martha, reflectively. "He was very obliging to me about—about getting Jo Wilkes off when I didn't want to go to court. They say he was dreadfully rude to Duke Rawlins, but, dear me! those two were always having it. I don't think a boy like him has any business to meddle."

It was evident that they had not heard just what Carlsen had said to Duke Rawlins.

"Martha, can I speak to you alone for a moment?" said Robin. How difficult it was going to be to break into Martha's frivolous chatter with a revelation like that!

"To Martha alone? Well, I must say it doesn't seem very friendly, when I've always thought so much of you, Robin!" There were symptoms of tears in Julia's voice. "And people *always* keep secrets from me; but, of course, you have a right to like her best if you want to."

"It hasn't anything to do with liking, Julia," said Robin, patiently. "It is only something very private."

"Oh, of course, if you don't want me to hear," said Julia, in an aggrieved tone, and walked away.

"Oh, Robin, is it a surprise for Ju? or a party at your house? Such a delightful house as it used to be for parties!" said Martha, dancing along the driveway backward before Robin in her eagerness.

"It isn't in the least like that, Martha," said Robin,



and her distressed face brought Martha's dancing to a sudden end.

"I hope it isn't anything very bad," she said. "I do love a bit of privacy, especially if Ju isn't to know anything about it."

She led the way into the library, and shut the doors carefully.

"There's no one about, anyway," she said. "Papa goes down to the works directly after breakfast, and grandma is sitting with mamma, who is in bed with a headache, and Miss Ferris—don't you tell, but Miss Ferris is priming herself in algebra; she has to before lesson hours. She has a key; I found it hidden under everything in her desk; and now *I* use it before she does. So it's a convenience to both of us, you see."

Robin's wide-open eyes looked an astonished reproof, and then they fell suddenly. Surely she had no right even to look reproof at any one. She thrust the roll of bank-bills into Martha's hands.

"Oh, Martha, you will take it to pay for the watch, and not let your father know, and not let people say it was Ken! It was, Martha—it was Ken, and not Jo Wilkes. He picked it up and—and kept it, because he had no money to go away with. He meant to pay for it right away, but, poor Ken! with a boy's wages, and we could send him nothing, and I tried, too; and then after I got the cranberry money and could pay, I was afraid you would find out. It seemed too dreadful to have people know that it was Ken, and it will kill my father if he ever hears it—it will kill him, Martha!" Robin's voice grew high and shrill in her excitement. "Of course it was dread-



ful to let Jo Wilkes be suspected wrongfully, but after he got away it seemed as if it—it might not hurt him so much."

"Why, of course, a person like Jo Wilkes, it can't matter much to him," said Martha. She leaned upon the arm of Robin's chair, nervously clasping and unclasping her hands. "I can't understand. You don't mean, Robin, that Ken would—would keep a watch! I don't see how you can think such a thing of your own brother." There was a touch of real indignation in Martha's tone.

"But, Martha, he did. You don't know what it is not to have any money. And he meant to pay—you'll believe that he meant to pay? And I was so thankful when Jo Wilkes got away! I helped him a little. I lent the *Mary Ann*, and Carlsen found it out. He saw me coming from Gridiron Cove, and there was where he found the ribbon that his little girl brought me the day of the lawn party. Don't you remember the checked hair ribbon? He suspected before, because I said that Jo Wilkes wasn't guilty. Don't you remember that day in the works when Dave Freneau made the lamp shade? The rest of you didn't think anything of what I said, but he did. And he told Duke Rawlins. Steve Prettygo heard; every one knows. Oh, Martha, won't you say that it's paid for? Try to keep people from talking? Help me to keep it from my father?"

"Will every one know? What will they know? You talk so fast, Robin, that I can't understand you. Of course Ken didn't. Oh, I wish you wouldn't make such a fuss! I'm sure I had trouble enough about it! I did hope there was an end of it when



Jo Wilkes got away! But you must have had a dreadful time!" Martha's peevish tone suddenly showed a touch of sympathy. "But I don't see how you could— Wait a minute and let me think, Robin; you do talk so fast!"

"I am sorry to be a listener, and sorry to see a little girl in such trouble." At the sound of the grave voice Robin sprang to her feet, and Martha screamed "Papa!" with an accent of terror. Mr. Hallett had parted the portière which divided his den from the library, and stood calmly holding back its folds. "But I can't possibly allow my daughter to be persuaded to promise to keep anything from her father, especially anything that seems so important as that. If a wrong has been done, an innocent person accused, and the guilty one allowed to escape, the wrong must be righted at any cost."

"Oh, what have I done? Why did I come?" cried Robin, wildly. "I have ruined Ken, and I have killed papa! Oh, why did I come?"

And then she dropped back into the luxurious depths of the yellow satin arm-chair—even the library in the Hallett house glowed with yellow satin—and fainted for the first time in her healthy young life.



## CHAPTER XVII

MR. HALLETT was very kind, and Martha was half sobbing when Robin came to herself, with Miss Ferris's pungent vinaigrette, which Martha had brought in haste, almost strangling her. She was still protesting piteously that she had ruined Ken and killed her father, but Mr. Hallett assured her that he had heard the reports, and should have felt obliged to investigate them, so her coming had made no difference.

"You won't, oh, Mr. Hallett, you won't let papa hear of it?" said Robin.

Mr. Hallett hesitated; he might have a kind manner, but he evidently had no intention of changing his purpose because a girl had fainted.

"I certainly shall not tell him while he is sick," he said at length; "though I think that the best thing for a boy, under such circumstances, is to have his father told. I must look up Jo Wilkes, and see that he doesn't suffer from the unjust arrest. That is no more than right, and—and it doesn't do for a firm to get the reputation of treating its workmen unjustly." Good Mr. Hallett honestly wished to right Jo Wilkes's wrongs, but he was also interested in the effect of the affair upon the firm of Hallett & Rawlins. Poor Robin, who felt herself such an experienced person, was getting her first lesson of the world. "No, no, my dear; we shouldn't take your



money, of course. If the young man himself should wish to pay for it, that would be another matter," said Mr. Hallett.

Robin went away but little consoled, although Martha had followed her to the gate, assuring her that it would "all die out, just as it had about Jo Wilkes." "But papa is dreadful," said Martha, still on the verge of tears. "You don't blame me now for being afraid of him, do you? But he will be careful not to let your father know; and oh, Robin, don't blame me for—for letting him overhear! I never thought he could be in his den, because he always does go to the works directly after breakfast."

"It didn't matter; he knew already," said Robin, hopelessly, as she went away.

Annette ran out and called to her as she was going by. She was half hysterical with delight, for once. Dave had come back; he was no longer "the strange boy who kept shaking his head at her." Robin tried to forget her own troubles and rejoice with her; but probably she was not very successful, for as Annette watched her retreating figure she tapped her forehead significantly:

"It appear as if anoder one have lose hisself. Oh, I hope not her who have been so good!"

There came a report the next day that Duke Rawlins was dangerously ill; fever had followed his nervous prostration, and for a time his life was despaired of; after the crisis was past he had a relapse, and there were conflicting reports of fear and hope.

"I think it's very queer that you don't even go over to inquire, you who are such friends with them," said Jean, wondering at Robin's silence and apathy.



"I have no right to go," said Robin to herself. "They have heard, too, and they wouldn't speak to me. And I was to blame for it all; if Duke dies I shall be to blame, for if I had told the truth, and Jo Wilkes had been released at once, the strike might never have happened."

The days dragged by, and Robin grew so nervous that she started at every slightest sound, and suffered an agony of suspense when her father had a visitor. She was even guilty of listening for a minute or two, once, when it was the benign old Methodist minister of Sandford, who was a great friend of her father; to tell the truth, she listened twice, he stayed so long. The door was ajar, and it didn't seem quite so dishonorable as if it had been shut. Once they were discussing Jonah, and the next time the currency question, and Robin drew a long breath of relief as she stole away.

Jean, who went now to the Sandford High-school, seemed to hear nothing of the suspicions and rumors with which Sandford must be rife; but then Jean had a happy faculty of hearing pleasant things sooner than disagreeable ones; and Jean had two new dresses and plenty of ribbons from the "cranberry money."

The Hallett girls seemed to avoid Robin, and it was no wonder, she thought, bitterly. Julia told her one day, when they met by accident, that Martha was not at all well.

"She's only fretting to go to New York, I think," Julia said. "Martha wants to be too grown up; she isn't so old as I am, if people do tell her things that they won't tell me."

The "privacy" seemed to be rankling in Julia's



mind, which was strange, Robin thought, since she probably knew what it was.

But the fact was that Julia did not know, Martha having developed an unusual reticence.

Martha rushed up to Robin one day and put her arms round her. "Oh, don't look like that, Robin!" she exclaimed. "It won't come to anything, not a thing! It's a great mistake to make too much fuss, because if you don't, things will come right. Papa can't find Jo Wilkes; he can't hear any news of him. And the *Wasp* hasn't come back to Fleetwell. So many young men go away from the Cape and never come back again! And I know papa will never make any fuss about—about Ken. All he thinks of is Jo Wilkes."

"It was dreadful about Jo Wilkes," said Robin, slowly.

"I don't see how you can think it matters so much for a person like that; he wouldn't care," said Martha. "And perhaps the *Wasp* went to the bottom," she added, cheerfully.

"Oh, Martha!" exclaimed Robin.

"One wouldn't wish it, of course; it was dreadful to say that," said Martha, contritely. "But, anyway, I don't believe Jo Wilkes will ever be heard from; so that is the last of all that fuss!"

Ken wrote often to Robin now, chiefly to inquire about Duke's condition, which was now slowly but surely improving. Robin's answers were of the briefest; she could not find courage to write of the great matter that filled her mind, and she found it impossible to write of commonplace events. She could write of Dave's recovery, although the doctor insist-



ed upon keeping him so quiet that it was difficult to discover whether he had wholly recovered his memory or not.

"Poor old Dave!" Ken had written in his latest letter. "It is good to hear that he is getting better, but, as I told you, I don't think so much about his father's discovery as I did. I wish it might amount to something, but I'm afraid the chances are small. Anyway, it's been a great thing for me, for it has shown me what I can do. I've been working, I can tell you, and studying up glass-making and coloring, and that's what I want to do. Of course I know it's a long road for a boy without money, but I have got a great scheme into my head since I've heard about the new flint-glass works that Hallett & Rawlins are going to build. I've read about them in the papers—the greatest thing in the country they're going to be. I'm thinking that fire wasn't such a bad thing! And it looks as if the opportunity for me were right there! How would you like to have your bad penny come back? I shouldn't expect much of a place at first, of course, but they would do better for me than strangers would. Mr. Fayer is going to write them a letter for me. He says he shall be sorry to lose me—he isn't a man of many words either, Robin, my lass—but he thinks that there's my opportunity. I'll tell you one thing, Robin, I'll be a better fellow if I do get home again. P. S.—You ought to see the letter which Mr. Fayer has written for me to Hallett & Rawlins! I'm afraid I couldn't get such a character at home for 'the strictest faithfulness and honesty,' but, Robin, as true as you live, I've turned over a new leaf!"



A new leaf! But who was to wipe out the record of the old one? The letter dropped from Robin's trembling fingers. To apply to Mr. Hallett for a position at the works! Ken always was audacious, she thought; he had never seemed to realize things like other people. She must not let him do that! she must write to him that it would not do. And yet why not let him be made to realize what he had done in that way as well as in any other? Poor, poor Ken, who seemed so strangely lacking in moral sense!

While she was still uncertain, in the beginning of winter, while the December days were short and cold, her father's illness suddenly assumed an acute form, and even her anxiety about Ken was almost forgotten in the new care and danger. He was delirious, and old cares thronged in his brain; the emptiness of the little church on the highest bluff and the uselessness of his ministry in Penauhant were the chief. It was Christmas Eve, and there were only dark shadows—shadows and silence—in the little church; that was the vision that haunted him in his delirium, and in his lucid moments he had shown that he brooded over the same idea.

"We must have a service on Christmas Eve! we must do it! The boys may not have forgotten their carols entirely," said Robin to Jean, as they stole out together from their father's room.

"But, Robin, it's so empty! The Land Company's creditors took even the chandelier, and the lamps along the walls!" said Jean. "And not so much as a desk—nothing but bare boards!"

The Rawlins's carriage stopped at the door in less than an hour after the girls had held this colloquy.



Duke, muffled in furs, only the gaunt framework of a boy, with his blue eyes more prominent than ever, was lifted out.

Ah, it was to Duke and Peggy and Kitty that she could tell her plan! Duke could scarcely be too ill to think of helping others, and Peggy would be in her element.

They were full of enthusiasm at once. Uncle Ambrose Gifford would read the service; there was only a week, but Peggy would help to teach the boys the carols, so far as they had forgotten them. A few of the choir-boys had gone away to sea, but most of them could be found without difficulty. As for lamps, that was no difficulty; were there not lamps enough in the Sandford stores?

Teaching the boys was hard work; they had forgotten the carols, and that was not the worst. Than-ny's voice, which had been in keeping with his cherubic appearance, had grown a shrill pipe; the best voices had all changed. But distance lends enchantment to sound as well as to sight. Was a carol ever anything but musical borne on the clear, frosty Christmas air? That was what Duke and Peggy said, and the others agreed with them.

Christmas Day dawned dull and lowering, with a hint of snow in the air. Before noon there came a message that Duke was ill again; very ill he must be, for the girls sent only a hasty word of regret.

"But the service need not fail. The boys can sing!" said Robin, with feverish eagerness.

She had told her father of what was to happen, at the doctor's suggestion, and he had seemed wonderfully soothed and cheered. He had had his bed



moved nearer to the window, that he might see the lights.

Robin grew anxious as the early twilight came on, and the lamps had not come. Uncle Ambrose Gifford, who had shown great interest, had ordered them from Boston, not finding any that were suitable in Sandford. It grew late; seven o'clock—eight, and the choir-boys and a sparse little congregation had gathered in the bare church, where burned only the few feeble lamps which could be spared from the house.

"They have all failed us, Jean!" said Robin, bitterly.

"I knew the Hallett girls wouldn't come, because Alice Gifford's going to have a Christmas party," said Jean.

Her father's repeated murmur, reported by Moira, cut Robin to the heart.

"It must have been a dream. I thought Robin told me that there would be lights and music in the church—a Christmas service in the empty little church. Of course it must have been a dream. There's a feeble little flicker of light—only enough to show the shadows that I'm always dreaming about."

Her mother came to Robin, weeping; the disappointment was throwing him into a fever, she said.

"Cap'n Saul! Thanny! help me to build a bonfire, so that its light will show through the windows of the church. There is wood in our shed—plenty of drift-wood on the shore. When once the fire is lighted, we can see to gather wood to keep it."

There were willing hands, in spite of the Sunday clothes, and just as the first flames darted upward a



carriage stopped at the church door, and Miss Ferris and Martha Hallett alighted from it.

"We were sorry to be so late, but the Christmas dinner, you know," gasped Miss Ferris; "and poor Mr Gifford has a dreadful attack of asthma—his old enemy—and the bonfire will be beautiful; but why is the church so dark?"

"The lamps didn't come," said Robin.

"The lamps! I went to the station and got them this noon myself, and sent them over!" said Miss Ferris. "Steve Prettygo agreed to deliver them safely at the chapel."

"At the *chapel*! Now that's just like you, Miss Ferris; you know you do get things so wrong!" said Martha, candidly. "He took them to the Quansett Mission Chapel, of course!"

"Oh, and is there nothing to be done?" cried poor Miss Ferris, wringing her hands.

"Yes, gather drift-wood; it makes such a fire!" said Martha Hallett. "And it's so delightfully Christmasy."

Martha scrambled through the sand, and made her way out among jagged crags of ice, regardless of her fine clothes, while Robin made Miss Ferris go into the church, which was warmed, consoling her by assuring her that she could help very much about the singing.

"Martha, your hands will be frozen, and you needn't work so; there are so many men. See! they keep coming!" said Robin, her heart wonderfully cheered.

"I want to help you! I want to so much! I'm so glad I didn't go to the party with Ju! If—if



anything should ever happen, you'll remember it of me, won't you, Robin?"

Robin listened, only vaguely wondering. She had such a care upon her mind about the fire, to keep it steady and not too high, so that discovery could not mar her father's satisfaction. Bonfires might be "Christmasy," as Martha said, but they would scarcely seem appropriate to her father as a means of lighting a church.

The choir-boys' voices were a little hoarse from their exertions, but the carols rang out bravely in the frosty air. And they all sang, with might and main, the old hymn which Mr. Dinsmore loved best of all—"While shepherds watched their flocks by night." The sick man's window had been opened a little, while he was carefully shielded from the air, and the doctor had said that it would "do him more good than medicine." Moira came and reported that he had gone to sleep "as soft and aisy loike as a babby" while they were singing that hymn.

"You won't forget, Robin, that I—I wanted to help you?" said Martha, insistently, as she went away.

"I don't know what she means," said Robin, a little impatiently, to Jean, who had overheard. "Of course I sha'n't forget that she was kind."

Moira had made coffee for the carollers, who had sung some of the carols around the house in the cold, and it was late before they had all gone.

Robin was extinguishing the light in the hall, when some one came running up the steps, three at a bound—Ken's way, thought Robin, with her heart leaping. It was Ken himself who burst in when the door was opened, panting and almost exhausted.





“ROBIN WAS EXTINGUISHING THE LIGHT IN THE HALL.”







"I've run all the way from Quansett—had to, to keep from freezing—got so chilled on that schooner!" panted Ken, dropping into a chair. "You see, Hank Colson lost his bearings somehow. He was bound for Fleetwell—there's where she hails from—the *Wasp*, you know; but he agreed to put in at Quansett and set me ashore. You see, I ran across Hank in Boston, just as Mr. Fayer had decided that I could come, though he had thought he couldn't spare me in such a busy time—the last of the year. I thought 'twas a streak of luck, because I couldn't really afford to come on the cars; a fellow doesn't exactly roll in riches the first year in business, and I've been saving up to pay—well, what you know about. I guess it hasn't hurt you as much as it has me!"

Robin drew a long, long breath. "Oh, Ken, I'm glad you've come!" she said.

"Well, I was beginning to think you didn't behave much as if you were," said Ken. "And it's a wonder that I'm here, let me tell you that! Came within a hair's-breadth of getting wrecked on the Chunks; she actually grazed on a rock! If it hadn't been for that bonfire, the *Wasp's* bones would most likely have been at the bottom now, and mine, and all the crew's!"

Robin clung to him, to be sure that he was real flesh and blood. For a moment nothing seemed to matter, since Ken's bones had not gone to the bottom. She told him the story of the bonfire, which had done so much more than was expected of it, and of the hope which the doctors had begun to hold out of her father's complete recovery.

"But he must have nothing to agitate or worry him, the doctors say—nothing, Ken!"



"Well, we won't give him anything, the dear old pater!" said Ken. "Sha'n't I astonish him with my Latin?—and with my zeal for business, too, I imagine. A fellow isn't stuck up or anything, you know, Robin, but I do want him to see the letter that Mr. Fayer wrote to Hallett & Rawlins for me! I asked them to send it yesterday, so it would get there just ahead of me, and I'm going to see Mr. Hallett to-morrow, Christmas or not. I can't wait, Robin. I would rather see him than Mr. Rawlins, because I want to feel as if I got the place on my own merits, without owing anything to Duke—dear old fellow! I hope he'll get well soon. And Dave! it's great about Dave! I must see him to-morrow too, if the doctor will allow it. I suppose he will by this time. It would be queer if there should be a fortune in old Freneau's way of coloring glass, after all, wouldn't it? Anyway, I feel like the old fellow who dug all over his farm to find a pot of gold; and though he never found the gold, he made his land so fertile by digging that he raised wonderful crops and got very rich. Well, if ever I ever do have any money or influence I'll have a light-house on the Chunks. There really ought to be, you know. Better ships than the *Wasp* have been wrecked there, and will be again. Jo Wilkes, a fellow who used to work at the factory, was on board, and came off at Quansett with me on his way to Sandford. It seems he was arrested for stealing something or other and ran away; he says it was a 'put-up job' of that Carlsen, and he can prove that he's innocent, and he's going to try to get work again at the factory. But you're awfully tired, Robin; how white you are! I mustn't keep you up



any longer. I begin to think you are a good deal of a somebody, Robin. You may live to build a bigger bonfire than that in the world!"

He did not know that any one had been arrested for the theft of the watch! There was a crumb of comfort in that, thought Robin. Perhaps he would not have allowed an innocent person to suffer.

What a strange chance it was that had brought Jo Wilkes back at the same time with Ken! She must prevent his going to Mr. Hallett; she must tell him that everything was known; but in the morning—in the morning!

It was a merry household in the morning, though it had to be a quiet one; the father was better, and Ken was jubilant; his high spirits infected every one but Robin.

"She looks all worn out," said Ken, to his mother. "She looks as if she *couldn't* smile."

"I'm beginning to fear that Robin hasn't a happy disposition," said his mother; "Jean is more like me."

"I want to speak to you, Ken, just a moment, before you go," said Robin, with dry lips and a voice that sounded strangely in her own ears, as Ken was making ready for his walk to Sandford.

"You can't just now, anyway," said Ken, "for there's Martha Hallett coming, and with a bee in her bonnet, of course; those Hallett girls always have."

But Martha's bee was not buzzing; she was quiet and solemn.

"She looks as if something had happened," said Ken, wonderingly.

"There are just you two alone? that's what I want-



ed," she said, looking around the room, and without a word of commonplace greeting. "Yes, I knew Ken had come"—in answer to an inquiring look from Robin. "Jo Wilkes came to see papa. And papa had a letter about you, Ken. He said—oh, *you* know what he would say, Robin, thinking what he did, and then I seemed to realize what I had done. I didn't at all at first, and I was so afraid that papa would send me away to school if he knew that I had made such a fuss and had Jo Wilkes arrested when he hadn't stolen the watch! And when you begin to deceive like that—oh, it is so hard to find a way out of it!"

"Of course I don't know what you're talking about," said Ken, "but I have tears if this is the time to shed them," he added, lightly. It was like Ken not to believe that Martha Hallett could have any real troubles.

"Oh, Robin knows! She will never speak to me again. I let her feel awfully, *awfully*, and I didn't own up, I was so afraid of papa!" cried Martha, in tones of such real distress that Ken's levity gave way to sympathetic interest. "It's about my watch that you found and brought back to me the morning that you went away."

"Brought—brought back to you?" echoed Robin.

The dreadful burden of months slipped off in that one blessed minute; but there was a burden of shame instead, that would not let her look up into Ken's bewildered face.

"I didn't tell that you had brought it back. I had had Jo Wilkes arrested, and papa would have been so angry. And when Robin thought that you—you hadn't returned it—"



"Robin thought *what?*" demanded Ken, in a voice which made poor Robin quake.

"You said, Ken, that you had—had done something desperate for money!" said Robin, summoning all her courage.

"So I did," said Ken. "It doesn't seem so desperate, now I have paid it, but I borrowed it of Duke Rawlins."

How simple was the explanation! Oh, the long, long weeks in which she had tortured herself needlessly!

"And I saw the watch in your drawer," continued Robin, with an effort, "and I found out from Martha—I thought I did—that you hadn't returned it, and—oh, Ken, it didn't come easy to think it of you, but what could I think?"

"It gives a fellow a curious idea of how he must have behaved to make his own sister so ready to think him a thief!" said Ken, dryly. "I remember now thinking that you had seen that watch, and were going to blame me because I forgot it."

"I told papa all about it this morning, and I suppose there's no hope that I sha'n't be sent away to that dreadful Normal School," said Martha, pathetically. "He said that if Miss Ferris were not going to be married, perhaps he wouldn't send me, for he thought well of her influence in spite of what I'd done. And fancy that I put it into both their heads! I was so crazy to get rid of her. I seem to have been such a fool! And I don't suppose you'll ever forgive me, Robin, you or Ken."

"Oh, bother forgiveness!" said Ken, in boy fashion. "Of course you couldn't expect to kick up such a bobbery."



"I'm afraid it was I who kicked up the bobbery," said Robin; and then she told him all about Jo Wilkes's escape in the *Mary Ann*, and Carlsen's reports; it was such a relief to have it all over at once.

"It is a little queer for a fellow who thought he was getting on in the world to find that every one at home was suspecting him of being a thief," said Ken.

"I can't ask you to forgive *me*, Ken," said Robin, humbly.

"Well, you look, old lass, pretty much as if you had got your deserts," said Ken, with a quiver in his voice. And then he gave her a thoroughly consoling hug, and went off with Martha, who had recovered much of her vivacity, to see Mr. Hallett.

"Oh, Jean, Jean, there never was such a Christmas day!" cried Robin, whirling into the nursery with a rain of happy tears upon her face.

"It is nice," said Jean, placidly, "with papa better, and Ken at home behaving so much better, and good news again from Duke" (Thanny, who had been sent to inquire in the early morning, had brought it), "and I must say that muff and boa were just what I wanted. But I hope, Robin, you're not going to get hystericky like Annette Freneau. It doesn't seem a bit like you."

Ken came back jubilant. Mr. Hallett had been more than kind, and had promised at once to give him the place that he wanted.

"He really feels badly about what that girl did, and it *was* pretty rough on a fellow—rougher on you, Robin."

"If you only will never think of it again, Ken," pleaded Robin.



"I won't. I have much pleasanter things to think of," said Ken. "I stopped to see Dave as I was coming home. They're not going to keep him quiet much longer; he's as well as ever. He drew out from under his pillow the whole formula of the glass-coloring, his father's great secret, written out from memory with a pencil and bit of paper which he had smuggled. I persuaded him to let me show it to Mr. Fayer. He'll know whether it's worth anything."

It was not until late in the spring, when the new works were in full blast, and Ken working his way bravely up through the trials of being only a boy, that it was discovered how much the secret was worth.

"I wouldn't say anything until it was tested at the works, though Mr. Fayer sent me his opinion a month ago," Ken said to Robin, trying hard to preserve a manly calmness. "It's a success—not a great fortune as we fancied, but a valuable patent, because it's a saving of money to glass-manufacturers. It is certainly worth twenty thousand dollars, perhaps twice that. I've told Dave that I wouldn't take a third, our old agreement. I haven't done enough to help him; it wouldn't be fair; but there'll be enough of my share to make things comfortable here at home, and to give me a little start when Duke and I go into business. And you, Robin, you mustn't be such a little drudge, with a load of care on your shoulders."

"Don't try to set everybody up in the world, Ken," cried Robin, gayly. "Even Thanny wants to be manager at the works. It's well that I have a contented mind, for I shall be left to be 'the cook and the captain bold and the mate of the'—*Mary Ann!*"











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